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ABSTRACT

This publication is designed to aid teachers and school personnel who are seeking ways to individualize reading instruction. The chapters include: "The Individualized Reading Program: A Perspective" by Lyman C. Hunt, Jr.; "Initiating the Individualized Reading Program: Various Transitional Plans" by Lorraine Harvilla; "The Conference in IRP: The Teacher-Pupil Dialogue" by Jeannette Veatch; "Classroom Organization: Structuring the Individualized Reading Period" by Jeannette Veatch; "Individualized Reading: Focus on Skills" by Marie Kupres; "Individualized Reading and Creative Writing" by Patrick Groff; "Evaluation for Pupil Effectiveness" by Donald Carline; "Evaluation for Program Effectiveness" by Donald Carline; "Developing and Supervising an IRP on a School-Wide Basis" by Russell R. Ramsey; and "Cf Stars and Statistics" by Harry W. Sartain. (WR)

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THE INDIVIDUALIZED READING PROGRAM:

A GUIDE FOR CLASSROOM TEACHING

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FOREWORD

THE INDIVIDUALIZED READING PROGRAM: A GUIDE FOR CLASSROOM TEACHING is one part of the *Proceedings* of the convention held in Dallas, May 4-7, 1966, by the International Reading Association. The growth of the annual convention of the association indicated the need for a more detailed convention report than a single volume *Proceedings,* which could do little more than summarize the individual presentations. Thus, the report of the 1966 convention is published in four parts: *Vistas in Reading,* edited by J. Allen Figurel; *Combining Research Results and Good Practice,* edited by Mildred A. Dawson; *Upgrading Elementary Reading Programs,* Citation Address 1966, by Gertrude Whipple; and the present volume, edited by Lyman C. Hunt, Jr.

Upon invitation of the President-Elect, Dr. Hunt first planned a sequence for the Dallas convention program and then brought together the major contributions from the various sections which made up the sequence. Dr. Hunt planned thoroughly and each participant, both at the convention and again as represented here, has spoken clearly and practically. For those teachers who wish careful guidance in carrying on an *entirely* individualized scheme of classroom organization, this volume should prove helpful. For those teachers who view individualized reading as an integral *part* of their total reading program, the present publication should offer some practical suggestions. For teachers who have always encouraged independent, personal reading, this presentation will serve as a resource against which they can measure their own approach to *individualizing* their reading program.

The International Reading Association wishes to thank Dr. Hunt and the contributing authors for the time consuming efforts required in developing the sequence on individualized reading and in preparing this volume.

DOROTHY KENDALL BRACKEN, *President*
International Reading Association
1965-1966

The International Reading Association attempts, through its publications, to provide a forum for a wide spectrum of opinion on reading. This policy permits divergent viewpoints without assuming the endorsement of the Association.

INTRODUCTION

This publication on individualized reading is designed to aid teachers and school personnel who are seeking ways to individualize reading instruction. The title *The Individualized Reading Program* indicates that much more than a method or a technique is involved in teaching by the individualized approach. A real effort has been made to show the classroom teacher "how-to-do-it," how to initiate and develop the program within the typical classroom situation. Certainly there is a need for the Individualized Reading Program (IRP) to be described with clarity and precision as has been done for the basal textbook program within the teacher's manual. By so describing IRP, the charge that teachers are not sufficiently competent or knowledgeable to carry through such a program will be less valid.

Efforts to individualize reading instruction are not new. The IRP is in a historical sense among the older types of classroom reading programs. Earliest references in the literature to this approach to reading instruction appear around the turn of the century (1900) (*1*). The IRP was conceptualized to a far greater degree in the 1920's, through the work of such educators as Lazar, Zirbes, and others (*2*). Willard Olson (*3*) has contributed significantly to the theoretical development of this program. In recent years the IRP has been given extensive treatment in the literature. *A Practical Guide to Individualized Reading* by Lazar, and others, is a curriculum guide of particular merit.

But basically the IRP is a teacher's program. It has been developed by classroom teachers who exercised the vision and courage to search for better ways to teach children to read. It is one innovation in the field of reading instruction to come largely from within the ranks of practicing teachers. By contrast, most other innovations in reading have been superimposed on teachers by outside forces. While the program has gained general acceptance rather slowly, many teachers in widely scattered areas have developed their own particular versions of the IRP. Increasingly this program is enjoying greater popularity among teachers as knowledge about it has spread throughout the country.

Accordingly, the purpose of this booklet is to delineate for teachers the various aspects of the IRP and to describe its nature. The major pieces

of its structure will be examined and the innermost details of its operation revealed. The various chapters of this publication are as follows:

1.	The Individualized Reading Program: A Perspective	Lyman C. Hunt, Jr.
2.	Initiating the Individualized Reading Program: Various Transitional Plans	Lorraine Harvilla
3.	The Conference in IRP: The Teacher-Pupil Dialogue	Jeannette Veatch
4.	Classroom Organization: Structuring the Individualized Reading Period	Jeannette Veatch
5.	Individualized Reading: Focus on Skills	Marie Kupres
6.	Individualized Reading and Creative Writing	Patrick Groff
7.	Evaluation for Pupil Effectiveness	Donald Carline
8.	Evaluation for Program Effectiveness	Donald Carline
9.	Developing and Supervising an IRP on a School-Wide Basis	Russell R. Ramsey
10.	Of Stars and Statistics	Harry W. Sartain

In writing each of these several components, focus will be held on the role of the teacher. Careful study of this booklet should enable a teacher to incorporate several (if not all) worthwhile features of the IRP into her own classroom reading instruction.

LYMAN C. HUNT, JR., *Editor*

NOTES

1. Harris, Albert J. "Progressive Education and Reading Instruction," *The Reading Teacher,* November 1964, Vol. 18, No. 2 (International Reading Association, Newark, Delaware), pp. 128-38.
2. Twenty-Fourth Yearbook, 1925, Part I—Report of the National Committee on Reading, W. S. Gray, Chairman, National Society for the Study of Education (Public School Publishing Company, Bloomington, Illinois, 1925).
3. Olson, Willard C. "Seeking, Self-Selection, and Pacing in the Use of Books by Children," *The Packet,* Vol. 7, No. 1, 1952, pp. 3-10.
4. Lazar, M.; Draper, M.; and Schwietert, L. *A Practical Guide to Individualized Reading.* New York Board of Education, Bureau of Educational Research, 210 Livingston St., Brooklyn, N. Y., 1960.

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1. The Individualized Reading Program: A Perspective

READING an abundance of good children's books is the essential feature of the Individualized Reading Program (IRP). This program more than any other gives children an opportunity to read extensively and independently from a wide array of books, all sorts of books, which have been published specifically to enlighten them about the world in which they live. An important outcome of this program is to extend and enrich reading rather than to limit and restrict it; this latter condition frequently results from the intensive analytical reading, which is so characteristic of current reading instruction. Children need opportunities in school to read widely.

The IRP, however, is more than wide reading. It is an intricate, highly-organized program of reading instruction within the classroom. As such it treats the reading process as an interaction of three component factors:

1] Skills development—
   From simple word-recognition skills through applications of skills to complex contextual material;

2] Response to ideas—
   From specific recall to deeper understandings and sensitive interpretations;

3] Attitudes and values—
   From lack of interest to developing life-time values and positive patterns of taste in reading.

Because the IRP deals with several dimensions of the reading process, a variety of reading activities develops simultaneously within the classroom. The teacher must orchestrate these varied activities. Thus the role of the teacher is vital to the success of the program; teaching individualized reading demands much more teaching by the teacher than when she carries out someone else's detailed plans. But the results are rewarding.

From the teacher's point of view, the major variables of the IRP fall within these major categories:

1] Instructional Materials—books, printed matter, pictures, and learning resources of all types;

2] Patterns of Instruction and Teaching Procedures—pupil guidance and conference time;

3] Classroom Organization and Room Arrangement—management to facilitate maximum learning by each individual.

The subordinate, but important, components of record keeping, book sharing, creative writing, and evaluation of pupil progress are adjuncts to these major features of IRP.

Defining the Teacher's Role

The IRP is teacher centered, rather than manual centered. As such its structure is not rigidly defined. Many teachers acting independently of one another have developed and organized the program according to their own conception of its operation. Therefore, certain aspects of the program may vary considerably from teacher to teacher, depending on the teacher's personality and on her interpretation of the goals of such a program. Some basic principles of the IRP, however, are common to nearly all classroom situations where it is employed. Typical common elements are:

1] Literature books for children predominate (rather than textbook series) as basic instructional materials;

2] Each child makes personal choices with regard to his reading material;

3] Each child reads at his own rate and sets his own pace of accomplishment;

4] Each child confers with his teacher about what he has read and his progress in reading;

5] Each child carries his reading into some form of summarizing activity;

6] Some kind of record is kept by teacher or child or both;

7] Children work in groups for an immediate learning purpose and leave the group when that purpose has been accomplished; and

8] Word recognition and related skills are taught and vocabulary is accumulated in a natural way at the point of the child's need.

In order to implement the IRP a teacher must have a balanced program in which each major instructional element is given appropriate consideration.

Instructional Materials The world of children's books can be described as one of wonder, beauty, and breadth of knowledge. One essential feature of IRP is providing children with the opportunity, under guidance, to explore the boundaries of their world through the fascinating world of children's books. A prime objective of IRP is to extend and enrich each child's thinking and appreciation by exploring books.

By contrast, most basal textbooks are anthologies of short stories or collections of excerpts from well-known original stories and books. Because each selection is short and discrete, there is little or no opportunity for the child to become deeply involved. All children need to read materials in which ideas are given extensive treatment and stories are fully developed through intricate patterns and complex story lines. Children, as readers, need to come to grips with total presentations as much as with selected parts—albeit the best parts of the book-length selection.

Teaching Procedures or Patterns of Instruction The IRP is based on the premise that each child's pattern of learning cannot be predetermined in either rate or manner and that learning can best be guided within a highly flexible framework allowing for considerable pupil choice and teacher judgment. Consequently in the IRP during the course of the school year, children are given the opportunity to read extensively in many books of all kinds and descriptions while, by contrast, children in the basal program are reading intensively in but two or three books. During the typical reading period in the IRP each child is reading silently in his own book, at his own pace, independent of other children.

If each child is permitted to choose his own reading material according to his own interests, his own stage of development, and his own proficiency in reading, he must assume certain responsibilities as a member of the class. It is the teacher's task to assess the degree of responsibility exhibited by each individual reader; but each child must help. Each freedom given to the child is balanced by a corresponding responsibility to himself—and to others. He must not behave so as to interfere with the responsible behavior of his classmates. Each child must sense how he fits into this kind of reading program. The alert teacher has this concept constantly in mind.

The teacher-pupil conference is central to the individualized reading

program. Within the conference the teacher uses all of her talents and knowledge to intensify the child's involvement with ideas and words. During this time teacher and child may discuss appealing aspects of the book, ideas presented by the author, implications of these ideas as guides for living, and the child's personal reaction to the book. The teacher determines whether the child knows in general what is happening and can select the important ideas in the book. In the IRP selecting important and interesting parts takes precedence over recounting in detail all that has been read in the book.

During the conference the child may occasionally request to read aloud particular passages which he has identified as being particularly significant. Accordingly, preparation must be made for sharing this book with the teacher and/or with the class. The teacher may make a note of the need for particular kinds of help or may provide some on-the-spot instruction. Guidance may be given in book selection when this aid is deemed necessary. The particular needs of the child involved determine the substance of the conference.

The art of questioning developed by the teacher assumes great importance in the success of the conference. Questions generally fall within one of three categories:

1] Appropriateness of the book—is the child selecting appropriate materials?
2] Appreciativeness of the book—is the child developing tastes and values?
3] Values gained from the book—is the child learning important ideas?

The key to the conference lies in the questions asked by the teacher. Learning to discuss books through the art of skillful questioning is undoubtedly the single most important instructional tool at the teacher's command. To be successful in the IRP a teacher must learn to discuss books with children when she knows the content and when she doesn't.

During the reading period there are many facets of the reading act in which the student may engage. In addition to long periods of sustained silent reading, he may be keeping records of what he has read, discussing his reading with his teacher or his classmates, writing creatively as a follow-up to his reading, or selecting his next book or reading material. Whatever phase of the total set of activities is engrossing him, he is making his choice; and, therefore, with a minimum of teacher guidance, he can be responsible for taking his own next steps. Obviously unless a

high degree of self-management is attained, the program will be less than completely successful.

Classroom Organization

A teacher may well ask how to manage a classroom when each child is in a different place in a different book. With more than thirty children this aspect is certainly a challenging if not a frightening situation. Room arrangement in IRP, however, is markedly different from the basal textbook program wherein children are assigned to groups according to their reading levels. Once grouped in the textbook program, directed reading instruction is presented to all children in the subgroup simultaneously according to a highly defined procedure within the manual. Each child, bound by the pace of his group, must accomplish material according to the directions given by the teacher.

In individualized reading opposite conditions prevail; children spend blocks of time reading extensively from a variety of possible choices. Typically each child remains at his seat reading silently the book he has chosen unless he is being given direct instruction by the teacher or working on some other activity related to his reading. While waiting his turn to talk with his teacher each child is busy reading.

Group activities, while almost continuously present, are not the order of the day as is so with the basal textbook program where, typically, instruction is given through ability groups. In IRP when several children are identified by the teacher as needing help in the same area, they are grouped together temporarily for this specific instruction. Children often like to work together in a common interest group and often do so without the teacher necessarily being present. Frequently, several children decide to read the same book independently and then meet to discuss the important ideas and what the book has meant to them.

Skills Development

Word-recognition skills are important and in an individualized program a child chooses, in part, the words he needs to learn. In addition, the teacher adds words which the child needs to learn and which will help most his learning to read at this time. There are opportunities for the child to make his own word lists or cards, to make his own dictionary or glossary, and to compile word files. Time is set aside to study these sources or to play word-card games — to participate, in fact, in a vocabulary growth.

Skill development, however, is more than learning letters, sounds, syllables, and words. It is learning to think when the printed word is the medium of thought. Long periods of sustained silent reading provide the practice needed for thoughtful reading. In the IRP developing the power of sustained silent reading is paramount. There is no reading skill of greater importance than that of skilful silent reading. The IRP provides the best opportunity to develop this skill.

Keeping Records

Teachers who use the individualized approach to reading instruction have found it necessary to devise ways of keeping records of the children's development in reading. Some find that a card or notebook page for each child can be easily used to record notes informally during the pupil conferences. Others use a more formalized checklist on which the teacher periodically records her observations concerning her children's performances and abilities. Such records serve as a guide for her own planning and a basis for reporting to parents on the child's progress.

Creative Writing

A concomitant value of the IRP is its close relationship with children's writing. This interaction between reading and writing reinforces development in each language area. Wide reading inspires increased writing. Writing not only demands disciplined thinking but enhances basic language development. Both qualities are basic to reading improvement.

Future Developments

Increasingly the IRP will become an integral part of the total reading program. Children must be granted the privilege of exploring the exciting world of ideas provided for them in the world of children's books. Those responsible for helping teachers improve the quality of reading instruction can endeavor to do so by giving definitions to individualized programs for teaching reading.

LORRAINE HARVILLA

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2. Initiating the Individualized Reading Program: Various Transitional Plans

CHANGE BEGINS with the process of thinking about how change can take place. The desire for change has emerged through dissatisfaction with procedures inadequate for meeting the needs of all pupils. Change is inevitable when inadequacies exist at both ends of the classroom continuum, from the least able to the most able. The thinking about change has begun when teachers ask themselves these questions: "How can I improve my instruction to meet more adequately the needs of each member in my classroom?" and, "Am I instructing my children to the best of my ability?" Teacher, supervisor, and principal, each has initiated change through the mental process of noting what is a plausible and feasible situation for change.

Individualization has catapulted into classroom instruction. Procedures and practices are changing. Teachers are helping one another by sharing the results of experimentation found to be successful in their classrooms. Research is indicating practical improvement in individualization of instruction. Practical steps into individualization of instruction in reading have been explained to parents. Children have learned ways of working independently; and transitions through discussion and planning among children, teachers, parents, principals, and supervisors have produced change.

First Steps

Classrooms in which the Individualized Reading Program (IRP) is in action must reflect the wide, wide world of children's books. Gathering materials is a primary step in the transition to an individualized program of reading instruction. Reading materials of varying interests and difficulties reflecting those of the children in each particular classroom should be made easily available to the members of the class. Classroom management and practices of an individualized reading program must be

sufficiently discussed. For some children, simply being provided ample opportunity to explore a variety of reading materials and being permitted to move as rapidly or as slowly as necessary are the only steps needed in transition.

Valuable sources of books for the classroom have included Books on Exhibit of Mount Kisco, New York; The Combined Book Exhibit of 950 University Avenue, New York; mimeographed materials from Dr. Lyman Hunt, The University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont; the school's central library, city libraries, Garrard Press of Champaign, Illinois; Scholastic Paperbacks, Englewood, New Jersey; *Elementary English,* a publication of the National Council of Teachers of English; and Young Scott Books, 8 West 13th Street, New York, to mention but a few of the unlimited sources. Personal books the children bring to share with their classmates are probably the most valuable of all. The teacher may have books from her own childhood reading. These, too, are of value to children in the classroom. *A Teacher's Guide to Children's Books* by Nancy Larrick published by Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., of Columbus, Ohio, and *The Proof of the Pudding* by Phyllis Fenner, published by the John Day Company of New York, should not be overlooked. Random House, Inc., of New York has, through the Dr. Seuss books, made numerous teachers aware of the appeal of the tradebook for children. This publisher has been especially valuable to teachers.

New Practices in Action

For a great many teachers and children the transition from one program of instruction to another is a step-by-step process. Introducing the entire class to a different way of working, experimenting with a reading group (any reading group), and helping a single child achieve in a more self-satisfying manner are also fine for the transition.

On the other hand, a transition through programs may be realized through a scheduling technique: one day a week, two-day or three-day schedules, half-year experimentation. Well-thought-through plans for work must accompany whatever ideas are satisfying to teacher, pupil, and administration.

From a Basal-Series Textbook Program to an Individualized Reading Program

Basal textbooks contain interesting stories that appeal to many children. Freeing the bonds by permitting a comfortable reading pace to be kept by

each child as he sees fit, makes them even more enjoyable. Some teachers extend that privilege to a single group of children; some, to all groups of children at a given time. Completing a unit of stories at differing rates of speed requires supplementary books in a similar-interest area to be read by the individual child when the unit is completed. Teachers who have made a change this way develop other practices of the IRP with the children, including conferences and creative endeavors or, as one teacher stated it, "doing something with your reading," as each (teacher and pupil) learns independence through experimentation.

Complete Transition with the Entire Class

When a teacher commits herself to complete transition from one program of instruction to another, children should understand the manner in which the reading program is to be sustained. Planning among the entire membership of the class includes the development of charts indicating the acceptable activities for the reading period. Some successful teachers find the following activities workable:

1] Choosing a book,
2] Reading quietly,
3] Writing about a book,
4] Having a conference, or
5] Reacting to what you read by
   a) Painting a picture,
   b) Making a puppet,
   c) Writing a poem, or
   d) Planning a dramatization.

(The children have numerous additional ideas of a quiet nature in reacting to what they read.)

6] Engaging in a word-learning activity (this one usually is a quiet word game involving several children), or
7] Marking the record. Recording information about a book, interesting comments, number of pages read, reaction to a character, or a situation in the book on a three-by-five dated card is sufficient record for some teachers. Others desire a notebook kept by each child as well as a teacher record book. Additional teachers find personal record folders kept by themselves to be sufficient. However, it is common practice for both teacher and pupil to keep in some permanent form a record of books read and instruction needed as

a guide for learning. The type of record keeping should be a functional one for the teacher. It should include the name of the child, the title of the book read, and the author's name. Children find it rewarding to write to authors. If the address is unknown, the publisher will forward the letter to the author. Receiving a letter from the author of a book read has been a thrilling experience for many children.

The teacher, too, needs to plan definite activities in which she engages during the reading period. Some teachers find the following daily program most acceptable:

1] Provide a few minutes to look over the entire classroom. During this time the teacher makes a mental check of the activities at which children are working. She takes a comprehensive overview to see that each child has made a worthwhile choice for a learning situation.
2] Have individual conferences. Some children are taught needed reading skills during this time.
3] Have group conferences about books read or being read.
4] Teach skills groups. These groups are made up of children who have needs in similar skills at the same time.
5] Provide opportunity for sharing what has been read.

One Group at a Time

Teachers desiring a slower step-by-step entrance into an IRP have followed a pattern similar to that of a complete classroom transition but have limited the change to a group-by-group process. Teachers work through the individualization processes with one group until security has been achieved and add an additional group to the practices of the program intermittently as the school year progresses. One teacher began with a single child, added a group to the program, and before the year was completed had made the transition with the entire classroom.

Teachers who make this step-by-step change sometimes conduct individualized reading one day a week for a period of time. The inclusion of a second day occurs within a short period of time. A third day may be included when teacher and children find it desirable. Some teachers continue the three-day, two-day program throughout the school year.

In his booklet published by Wm. C. Brown Book Company of Dubuque, Iowa, Richard Wilson charts a schedule of change in the

following manner: The first week the high group has individualized reading Thursday and Friday while the average and low groups have group reading. The second week the high group has individualized reading Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday; the average group has individualized reading Thursday and Friday while the low group continues group reading. During the third week the high group has individualized reading Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday; the average group, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday; the low group Thursday and Friday. During the fourth week the high group has individualized reading the entire week; the average group, Tuesday through Friday; and the low group Wednesday through Friday. In the fifth week both high and average groups continue individualized reading all week while the low group has individualized reading Tuesday through Friday. In the sixth week complete transition has taken place. This plan of gradual change appears to be appropriate and acceptable for many teachers.

From Programmed Self-Selection to Complete Self-Selection

In the classroom where children are already accustomed to some independence in reading, the elimination of the programmed materials and the introduction of a variety of children's books might be the first step in transition to practices of the IRP in its entirety. The enjoyment of independence in reading is already established. Obtaining needed assistance from classmates and teacher requires an understanding of the means by which help may be obtained. May I ask help of my neighbor and how frequently? At what times is it permissible to go to the teacher? How much mobility is acceptable in the classroom? Such questions each teacher must answer for herself.

Helpful References

Numerous articles concerned with the IRP have appeared recently in educational periodicals. Chapters in textbooks on reading instruction have appeared in many of the later texts. To mention all would be burdensome and less valuable to the reader. Those included below have proved to be most helpful as guides and directives to teachers instituting this reading program.

Brogan, Peggy and Fox, Lorene K., *Helping Children Read.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1961. This book spells out step by step the ways some teachers began managing reading instruction

in a "different" way.

Darrow, Helen Fisher and Howes, Virginia, *Approaches to Individualized Reading.* New York: Appleton-Centure-Crofts, 1960. Educators find this booklet contains many practical suggestions for teachers and children.

Films. *From the Bookshelf.* Audio Visual Aids Library, The Pennsylvania State University Library, University Park, Pennsylvania. These twenty kinescopes about individualized reading instruction are the result of the project "Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Televised Programmed Series on Reading Instruction," directed by Lyman C. Hunt, Jr.

Harvilla, Lorraine, Duplicated Materials. Kutztown, Pennsylvania: Kutztown State College. These papers were developed by students studying the IRP and in-service teachers involved in classroom changes in reading instruction.

Hunt, Lyman C., Mimeographed Materials. University of Vermont, Burlington. These papers were written by teachers who have introduced and taught reading following the precepts of the IRP. They include also papers on the philosophy and concept of the program. This material has proved its worth to teachers making the transition. They are highly recommended by this writer.

Veatch, Jeannette, *How to Teach Reading with Children's Books.* New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1964. This practical guide is written in pictorial form. Many teachers and students find it very helpful.

Veatch, Jeannette, *Individualizing Your Reading Program.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1959. The philosophy and practice of the IRP are explained for teachers in easy-to-read text. This material also includes discussions on classroom practices as teachers experienced the change of program. Recommended also is Dr. Veatch's recent publication, *Reading in the Elementary School.* New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1966.

Wilson, Richard C., *Individualized Reading, A Practical Approach.* Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Book Company, 1965. Many helpful charts for making the transition and keeping records are included in this booklet. It is one of the most valuable booklets available to teachers. It spells out in specific terms the what, why, and how of the IRP.

JEANNETTE VEATCH

JERSEY CITY STATE COLLEGE

3. The Conference in the Individualized Reading Program: The Teacher-Pupil Dialogue

THE INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCE is the most important aspect of the individualized reading program (IRP). Through this brief, intensive, personal contact the teacher may determine each child's interest, personality, and reading strengths and weaknesses. The instruction stands or falls on the ability of the teacher to *teach* in this situation. Its potential for learning is tremendous. It is a Mark Hopkins-on-the-end-of-the-log situation.

The conference should include these major phases:

1] Preparation (teacher and child)
2] Conference Proper
   Evaluation by teacher of
   a) Comprehension skills
   b) Clues to personality according to choice of books
   c) Mechanical skills
   d) Oral Reading Ability
3] Closure of the Conference

Preparing for the Conference

Teacher For the best conference a teacher should have 1] some knowledge of the reading materials, 2] some form of record keeping, 3] a standard for the child to reach for, 4] some knowledge of the child, and 5] some materials for further skill development.

Knowledge of the reading materials: You will notice that some of the questions in the sections on comprehension and mechanical skills are of such a nature that a teacher can gain insight into the child's preparation, understanding, and appreciation of his reading even if he, the teacher, has not read the book.

Record Keeping: Teacher records are usually kept in a loose leaf (*not spiral bound*) notebook. Pages need to be added and removed. Teachers may record during the conference provided it does not detract or interfere. Whether the record is kept during or immediately after the conference, or both, the child should have some idea of what has been written. Sitting side-by-side helps all of these processes.

A knowledge of a child's personality, interest, and ability serves as a guide in meeting the needs of the child. This matter is treated in some detail in the section on records.

Some materials for follow-up can also be at hand, although page-by-page following a workbook is not acceptable.

Children The child decides which book he will take to the conference and prepares it according to preplanned standards. He records the necessary information in his notebook. He prepares to discuss the story and is ready to read a portion of it aloud.

Conference Proper

The success of the IRP depends greatly on the type of questioning the teacher pursues in the individual conference. Open-ended, thought-provoking questions are most desirable.

Suggested Questions

Comprehension Area

1] Main Idea

Can you give me the main idea of the book in one sentence?
What was the plot of the story?
Does the setting of the story affect the plot?
Is the author writing about people living today, or people who lived a long time ago? How do you know?
Was this time element important to the story? How?
Have you read any other books that are similar to this book? How are they similar?
How does the title of the book relate to the story?
What kind of a story was this?
Describe this book with one word if you can.

2] Appraisal of Child's Value Structure

What do you think about this story?
Could you get into an argument about this book? Why?
On which side of the argument are you? Why?

After you read this story, did you feel as though you wanted to do something about something? What?
Did anything in this book make you change your mind about something? If so, what was it?
Do you always believe everything you read in books?
Would you like all your classmates to read this book? Why?
Did the book make fun of anyone?
Was the main character in the story perfect, or did he or she make mistakes?

3] Inferential and Critical Reading
Did any character in this story have to overcome a difficulty? If so, what do you think about the way he or she did it?
When you read this book, did you get any ideas which were not actually put into words?
What was this story *really* about?

4] Sequence of Story
If this story were a play, what main event would make up each act?
Look at this illustration. Describe what is happening and what happened before and after this particular incident.
Tell me the story (in part or whole).
Did the story end the way you expected it to end?
Would you like to change the ending in any way? Why?

5] About the Author
What is the name of the author?
Do you know anything about him or her?
If you wrote the author a letter, what would you say about his book?
Have you read any other books written by this author?
Would you now go and look for more books by this author?
Do you think the author wrote this book purely for children's enjoyment or to give children information?
Do you think the author might have children of his own?
What makes you think so?

Reasons for Book Choices and Clues to Personality

1] Personal Identification
Why did you choose this book?
Did you like the book? Why?
Why did you choose this particular book to present to me?
Did you choose this book because you thought I would be pleased?

What part of the book did you enjoy particularly? Why?
Do you think you would enjoy living like, or being like, the person in the story? Why?
Did any part of this book bore you? Why?
Has anything ever happened to you like what happened in the story?
Which character in the story didn't you like and why?
How did the story make you feel? (Happy, angry, thankful, etc.)
Did you learn a lesson from this book?

2] Awareness of Peer-Group Action
Was there anyone in the story who seemed lonely? Do you ever feel lonely in our classroom or on the playground?
Was the main character in the story popular or unpopular? In our classroom which child do you think is popular?
Do you think there might be some children in this classroom who would like the same kind of books that you like? Why do you think so?
Do you ever get together with your friends to read books?
Would you rather read to a friend than have a friend read to you?

3] Evidence of Modification of Behavior
Do you read more books now than you used to? Why?
When you are asked what you would like to have for a gift, do you ask for books? If yes, what type?
Do you have some problems like people had in the story? How do do you try to solve these problems?
Do you usually ask your mother and dad to help you with your problems or do you prefer to ask your friends to help you?
Did any of the actions in the story remind you of something you ever did?
Did any character in the story do anything that you would be ashamed or afraid to do? Explain.

Mechanical Skills

1] Word Definitions
Here is an unusual word. Can you tell me what it means?
Can you tell me another word that means the same or almost the same thing?
If I said (naming an antonym or homonym), would you say this word was the same or opposite in meaning?
Did you find any words that had a different meaning when you

read them somewhere else? What was the difference?
Use this word in a sentence.
Can you find a word on this page that has more than one meaning? (bat, ship, walk, for example).

2] Study Skills
Show me the index (table of contents), title page, etc.
What thing(s) does this page tell us?
Find page(s) where such and such is described.
Did pictures help you understand this book? How?
How do you find things in the index (table of contents, title page)?
Can you locate the setting of this story?
Can you find the general topic of this story in another book? In any reference books? Other texts in other subjects?
Can you tell me the thread of the story by looking at the table of contents?
Skim this page and tell me ———.
Are there any graphs, charts, or maps which helped you? How?

3] Ability to Analyze Unknown Words. These skills can be developed best in independent writing.
Show me a word you did not know. How did you figure it out?
Here is a word that seems difficult. What is it?
How did you figure it out? (Initial letter, blend, rhyming, ending letter, vowel sounds, and general configuration.)
Let me cover up part of it. Now what do you see? Say it; now here is the whole word. Can you say it?
The word starts like _____ but rhymes with _____. Try it.
Choose a word at random:
What is the root word?
What is the prefix?
What is the suffix?
Unlock the word meaning for me by telling me what this word means with a prefix, a suffix, or both.

4] Reading for Details
The child should be questioned for details according to the nature of the material. If the book is concerned with such areas as
How to build or make things.
How to perform an experiment.
The following of recipes.
Then reading for details may be included.

Oral Reading in the Conference

The purpose for oral reading in the conference is to determine how effectively the child can "hold an audience." It highlights the conference. The evaluation of the oral reading should be based on how effectively the child can make his reading sound like talking. It is a perfect opportunity to "show-off" in a healthy way.

The teacher can help the child to develop natural expression by giving quiet, incentive remarks while the child is reading. Below are several examples of such incentive comments:

What happened next?
Is that so!
Make it exciting! (spooky, silly, etc.)
Come on!

The selection which the child reads orally should always be material with which he is familiar and which he is prepared to read aloud. The child should read a selection which is suited to his ability and needs. For these reasons it is generally agreed that the child should choose the selection and the amount of it that he wishes to share with his teacher. The teacher may wish to ask the child the reason for his particular choice.

Closure

In the closure of the conference the teacher and pupil evaluate progress and plan for an activity or project, and the teacher offers guidance on selections of books for further reading. The conference is concluded on a positive note at a logical pause in the material or teaching.

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4. Classroom Organization: Structuring the Individualized Reading Period

THE OPERATION of this approach to reading instruction demands an increase in resourcefulness of children to work in activities that have a strong element of self-assignment within them. Teachers may teach particular skills in tool-subject areas in other parts of the day's schedule, but the pupils must be helped to recognize and accept responsibility for that which they do not know. They then must go to work on it.

No teacher can teach anything if he is constantly interrupted. Therefore, there must be a general plan that is developed day by day. Such a plan involves something like the following sequence:

1] Planning the independent work period.
2] Choosing a book and reading it silently.
3] Making decisions about each book chosen and read.
4] Preparing for the individual conference.
5] Preparing for instructional groupings.
6] Preparing for the amalgamation into the rest of the curriculum.

Planning the Independent Work Period

Pupils must accept the responsibility of developing activities which absorb them and thus are performed with a minimum of help. The teacher needs to do a fast round-the-class check up to anticipate a possible problem. Once a teacher begins his instruction in individual conference, no interruptions, except for emergency conditions, should be allowed. The teacher, in short, must teach.

The first item on any educational independent work period during the reading period—as differentiated from the busy-work type—is that of silent reading of a self-chosen book. This selection should occupy the pupil from 20 to 30 minutes or longer. If there is frequent changing of

books, the teacher must recognize that 1] he has not done a good enough job of helping children choose books wisely or 2] the book supply is inadequate.

Rare is the teacher who knows how to keep the whole class busy enough to make individual conferences possible. The purpose of this section is to help those teachers who would like to move in this direction.

The activity centers for independent work suggested below allow for many options. All activities should be self-educative in character be attractive and interesting, and need a minimum of teacher check-up afterwards. Suggested centers are:

1] The Book Center, where all of the books in the room—texts, trade, reference works, etc.—along with chairs (a rocker is dandy), and/or a table for quiet reading of a self-chosen book, are located.

2] "A Writing Center," where lovely, new, long, sharp pencils and a stack of nice, clean paper beckon those who have a good story to write or an important letter to send. Stamps, envelopes, even a typewriter (used or new), should be a part of every classroom's writing center.

3] "An Art Center," a place for paints, clay and other wet media, with nearby wash-up facilities (a pail works fine). A place for colored chalk, crayons, and other dry media, along with colored construction paper, scissors, paste, and all other necessary implements.

4] "A Science Center," where, hopefully, plenty of observational tasks can be set up. Here are the magnifying glasses to be used on plants, the turtle, the snail, terraria-aquaria, and other science equipment.

5] "A Materials Center" for math materials or constructive materials such as Lincoln Logs, Erector Sets, and the like. Magnets may be here or in the science center.

6] "A Teacher-Made Follow-Up Exercises Center," where children can be sent to find self-drill assignments on some nagging problem, such as multiplication tables, homonyms, digraphs, or whatever.

7] "A Dramatization Center," where the social-studies unit can be role-played and stories can be practiced with puppets, etc.

With this kind of classroom, teachers will find themselves progressively free to teach children individually. All activity during any instructional period must, of course, be quiet enough not to interfere with the teaching

and learning going on. Routines will need to be set and children taught how to proceed. But once these centers are in operation, the teacher can be marvelously free to teach.

Choosing a Book and Reading It Silently

The criteria for choosing a book are simple indeed. The teacher trains, instructs, role-plays, and in other ways shows children *how* to choose a book that is just right for them at that time. The teacher might say something like this:

> Look over all of the books. Pick one that looks like it might be the one you want. Riffle its pages. Pick some page in the middle of it. Start to read it to yourself. If you come to a word you cannot figure out, put your thumb down. If you come to another, put your first finger down; another, your second finger; and so on. *If you use up your whole hand, that book is too hard!* Put it down and start all over again. I do not want to hear your worst reading. I want your best. It will be your best when you choose a book that you like and that you can read with very little help.

Thus a teacher helps a child choose a book that is within his independent level, which *is* his instructional reading level. An adequate book supply will insure that each child will find a book that meets his interest. If such is not available, the teacher must encourage children to write a note (or report orally, if they can't write) requesting desired books.

Assuming that every child finally has a book that will absorb him for some time (at this point, this reading program looks not unlike a library period) he can proceed with the next item of business.

Making Decisions About Chosen Books

Several options are available:

1] "Shall I prepare it to bring to my teacher in an individual conference?" (If so, then I must be sure I know it well.)

2] "Shall I do a project (diorama, experiment, or some other project) with an idea gained from this book?"

3] "Shall I present this book in some form during our sharing period?"

4] "Shall I simply record it in my notebook and go and choose another to read?"

Preparing for the individual conference was described in the preceding chapter. The teacher needs to help children be aware of the kinds of ideas to be explored in the individual conference. Children must, literally, "practice up" on what to expect with their book.

Doing a project is a fine way for a child to develop independence, resourcefulness, and creativity. He should check out his plans with his teacher—but the main ideas should really be the child's own. The more a teacher promotes this type of self-assignment the more exciting and rewarding the projects may be. The teacher's expert knowledge is essential, but motivation is more powerful when a child works on his own ideas.

The sharing time is best held at some other time of the day than during the reading period. Many teachers find Friday afternoons exhausting and difficult. Sharing time (replete with a steering committee) can make these fatiguing hours a pleasure indeed. The pupils may plan projects, or skits, or in some way legitimately "show-off" what they have prepared.

A simple recording in the child's notebook would include certain items such as author, title, date read, a short comment. Some teachers like to have children write a paragraph about a book. Whatever the length of such a request is not what matters. What DOES matter is whether the keeping of a record, in effect, punishes a child for *finishing* a book. Nothing, at any time, should slow up the desire of a child to read. We are for reading in quantity, in millions and billions and trillions of books —good books, good literature.

Preparing for the Individual Conference

The most important preparation a child can make for his individual conference with his teacher is to have read his book thoroughly. But this preparation is not a one-way street. Early in the school year, the teacher must show the pupils the kind of questioning they can expect. Perhaps a bit of role-playing with some brave soul taking the lead role would benefit. Perhaps an explanation of all the ways in which the teacher will ask questions will suffice.

Often a pupil will benefit by choosing a buddy and trying out certain skills, say oral reading, on him. Often one's best friend is one's severest critic. This fact must apply at the childhood level as well as at the adult!

In any event, the pupil should never feel that his teacher is going to "sneak" up on him. He should feel that his teacher will be *very* interested and that he will give his undivided attention to the child for the duration

of the conference. A teacher should help a child gain confidence. Maybe there will be butterflies in the stomach at first (this feeling happens even at the college level!) but, assuming preparation is adequate, it should be an exciting discussion about the book the child has read.

Instructional Groupings

The major skills of comprehension may be investigated at the individual conference. "Reading between the lines" inferentially, critically, or creatively—these all really mean the same thing. Put another way, the conference is devoted to the development of eternal vigilance of the printed word, for such is the salvation of the democratic society. Purposes, values, guilt feelings, triumphs, suspicions, frontier-pushing, all this and more is taught—by discovery, be it clearly noted—by the incisiveness of the teacher's questions and responses.

Thus from this exploration of problems and disabilities, *around the central problem of over-all comprehension,* a teacher will be able to spot those children who reveal needs in such matters as:

Oral reading,
Omission of *crucial* words (not just minor ones),
Repetitiousness of certain lines and phrases,
Obvious lack of understanding of the hidden meanings in the material,
Voice quality, control and volume, etc.

The finicky check-off lists that can be found in many reading texts add up to one fact when the above symptoms occur. That fact is that the child does not understand what he is reading. When this fact is exposed, the teacher has the option of either asking the child to get an easier book or forming a group of children with similar difficulties and frankly discussing the problems with the group in order to discover the basic problem.

When grouping for instructional purposes, the teacher should meet with each group consecutively. Those groups which do not need the teacher's specific instruction can work in separate groups at the same time.

The matter of word analysis must, in this writer's opinion, be introduced, taught, and built during the WRITING (or spelling) period. Word analysis is word-breaking-up. This is essentially a writing operation,

not a reading operation. Word perception is essentially a reading operation. When children have been taught word analysis (phonics if you will) through their independent writing activities,[1] the skill of analyzing a word is AVAILABLE in the child. The teacher may assist the child in recalling this skill when he becomes stuck on a word in reading.

Thus groups can be set up during the reading period for this purpose once the organization of the difficulties into group has been made by an analysis of the *writings* of the class.[2] To pull the *teaching* of word analysis out of the reading period allows the teacher much more time to work at "reading between the lines." And that's more fun to teach!

Preparing for the Amalgamation of Reading into the Rest of the Curriculum

Mainly, the rest of the curriculum needs reading. Yet the dilemma of the single text book can get in the way. Social studies can be taught without social studies texts for anyone but the teacher (and then only for reference). There are numerous trade (i.e. library-type) books available for most age levels for children to read in depth in most phases of the social studies, science, and even arithmetic. Any good children's book list contains hundreds of books that are of content nature. Many authorities agree that "content" reading is different from "reading" reading. They don't quite say it that way, but that is what they mean. "Reading" reading is the kind that has little or no application to anything else. Children should and can be taught to read content when they are able to choose from hundreds of books available.

Thus when the classroom organization patterns are shaping up, the teacher will help children plan to choose books that will have application to their social studies unit, to story problems in arithmetic, to story writing in written language, to dramatizations in oral language, and so on. The carry-over is not hard. It takes an adequate supply of books. Substitution of trade books for the usual basal reader will allow extra money. The use of paper backs allows the school system to expand its book collection and many schools now use paper backs.

As has been suggested earlier, a teacher should teach skills such as those found in penmanship during another portion of the day and then

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[1] See the writings of Mauree Applegate; Sylvia Ashton-Warner; Grace Fernald; Alvina Burrows; and the present writer on this matter.

[2] See R. S. Fleming (Ed.). *Curriculum for Today's Boys and Girls.* Merrill. p. 180 ff. J. Veatch, *Reading in the Elementary School,* Ronald, pp. 360-361.

encourage children to take part of their independent work time to polish up those skills in which they are weak.

Most of all though, the role of the teacher is to relate the classroom experiences to activities in the outside world. Classroom instruction includes discussion of newspapers, radio, television, and other activities of the outside world. The total melds into one learning whole. For, as all good teachers know, reading is not for reading. Reading is for learning.

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5. Individualized Reading: Focus on Skills

THIS PRESENTATION pertains to teaching of skills in an individualized reading program (IRP). Whether skills should be taught in an individualized reading approach is not an issue. If we consider an individualized reading approach as a basic program of reading instruction (and this point of view we do hold), then it is evident that a sequential skills development is an integral part of a program. There are many excellent professional materials dealing with the teaching of reading skills. These references are appropriate for an individualized reading program as well as a program based upon basic-reading textbooks. Therefore, rather than to discuss the importance of a skills program, this approach will be to present a personalized view of an individualized reading program in operation. The development of skills will be evident.

A visit will be made to an intermediate-grade classroom where a teacher has an IRP in progress. The reader will recognize that the classroom and teacher being described are composites of many classrooms and many teachers. The reader also should be aware of the fact that this presentation is based upon the particular experiences teachers have had with an individualized reading approach in Indiana schools.

Framework for Skills Instruction in an Individualized Reading Program

Before entering a classroom, a background of the total school philosophy in which this program operates will be helpful. The focus of the teaching staff and the educational program is on the individual learner—his interests, needs, and growth in learning. There are curriculum guidelines for teachers in all areas of the curriculum; however, flexibility and creative approaches to teaching and learning are encouraged. Reading instruction is viewed as having a broadened base which means that many

materials of various kinds are used. A multiple-text approach is used by those teachers who base their instruction on a reading textbook series along with the use of trade books, reference material, and periodicals. Also, reading skills are taught throughout the school day in all areas of the curriculum.

For the past ten years in this school system, many teachers have moved voluntarily into an individualized program. These individualized reading programs are not supplementary programs begun after a basic-text program is completed. They are planned and initiated as basic instructional programs, especially designed to meet the individual needs of children. The skills program encompasses the broad spectrum of skills; comprehension and interpretation abilities are developed as well as word-attack skills.

Teacher Preparation

How does the teacher personally prepare for individualizing reading instruction? Here is one teacher's response.

> "I felt for a period of years the need to broaden my reading program. I found basic and supplementary texts and workbooks too confining for advanced readers and unrealistic for less able readers. My first step toward an individualized approach was to read everything I could find on the subject. I attended in-service meetings planned by the curriculum department, visited other classrooms where the program was used, and talked to teachers who were utilizing an individualized approach. I had a wide range of reading materials for self-selection, a variety of skills practice materials, and a good understanding of reading skills. I was willing to try a more flexible program. I realized there would be periods of trial and error and that an individualized reading program would truly be 'learning-on-the-job.' I was very concerned about teaching the skills for each child and giving the kind of help necessary to develop independent readers."

This teacher describes some of the first steps taken to initiate an individualized program:

1] Identifying the basic-reading skills to be developed in an IRP. Of course, these are the same skills which are developed sequentially in a basal text program. Basic texts were checked as well as the Barbe Reading Skills Checklist (*2*). All the skills were listed from readiness through advanced levels. When completed, the list in-

cluded skills related to vocabulary development, comprehension, interpretation, and reaction, as well as the word-perception skills.

2] Noting the skills needed to help children read effectively in all areas of the curriculum.

3] Making a skills check sheet for each child for use during individual conference periods.

4] Gathering all the skills instructional material that could be located. Other teachers recommended materials which they thought were especially valuable for skills development. (Skills materials selected and used will, of course, be different for every teacher and every group.)

Based on experience in teaching, the teacher commented that all children do not learn skills according to a pre-determined pattern, that skills are not wholly learned at any one time, and that reinforcement and refinement of skill utilization is necessary as children mature and use more advanced materials. It is a common experience to find that some intermediate-grade children need instruction in word-attack skills specific to the usual primary grade program, while others need help with more difficult word-attack skills. This same condition is also true for individual children as related to comprehension and interpretation skills. It is an error to assume that a child who reads above grade level can go along on his own. Such a child can profit from help in refining and extending reading skills, especially those skills related to evaluating ideas, reading between the lines, making judgments, seeing relationships, and building vocabulary. In-depth instructional periods with very capable readers are, by the way, one of the most rewarding experiences to be found in an IRP.

Analysis of Pupil Needs

Once the teacher has made the initial steps in self-preparation, how are the needs of the pupils determined? Another teacher responds to this question:

"I believed that the most crucial aspect of developing an IRP was to establish the proper atmosphere and to build pupil attitudes about the program. For several weeks, we discussed procedures for self-selection of books, ways in which we would work together on skills development, and plans for recording and sharing our experiences. Parents were thoroughly informed about the program and asked to visit the classroom to see the program in operation.

During the first scheduled reading periods, pupils explored and read widely from the materials available in the room. It was during this time that I planned an individual conference with each pupil in order to analyze his strengths and weaknesses."

Prior to individual conferences, the teacher prepared for meeting each child by

1] securing available data regarding each child's ability and achievement, perusing cumulative reading records, and noting pertinent comments made by former teachers. (If test scores were not available, aptitude, diagnostic, and achievement tests of reading were given to obtain an overview of each child's potential and his reading level. Care was taken to determine if any physical impairment was present that might retard reading.)
2] requesting each child to fill in the Kottmeyer Interest Inventory and Background Information Data Sheet (*3*).

In general, the teacher used the following procedures during the initial conference:

1] discussed the interest inventory with each child to learn about pupil attitudes and interest and to establish a friendly and personal relationship.
2] heard each child read orally from basic-reading texts using materials below, at, and above the child's achievement level. (Tape recordings of the child's oral reading were made and replayed, and the child was helped to identify some of his reading needs. Oral reading provided a quick check on comprehension, fluency, and word-attack skills.)
3] helped each child plan a reading folder for his own reading record. (One section was to contain a cumulative account of books read; another was to relate to his skills needs; and another section was to be an account of his personal daily reading plans.)

At the conclusion of the conferences, the teacher's records for each child included test data, information on attitudes and special interests, a sequential listing of skills to be used as a checklist, and any other pertinent data which might provide clues for meeting the child's needs.

Teaching the Skills of Reading

Once an analysis of pupil needs has been made, what steps are taken by the teacher and children as they work on skills development? For this

information, a visit to the classroom provides an opportunity to observe the children's activities under the teacher's guidance.

Note that the reading period is scheduled for at least an hour. Each child has his reading folder open on his desk so that his personal plans for the day's reading period can be seen. On the chalkboard, the teacher and children have written their plans for the reading period. Some children have requested brief individual consultations. These brief consultations enable the teacher to give personal direction to those children who indicate that they need help to proceed before they have an individual conference. Consultations serve as "hurdle helps" and might answer such questions as, "May Jim and I work together with these analysis cards?" "May I plan a play about my book?" "May John and I go to the materials resource center to check some reference material?" "Will you help me with the directions for this practice sheet?"

Some children are scheduled for conferences of five-to-ten minutes each with the teacher. Conferences will include oral reading, discussion, and teacher-pupil diagnosis of skills needs. Three children are to meet as a needs group to work on syllabication. An interest group of five children is scheduled for a discussion of the biographies they have read. The rest of the class will be reading the books they have chosen or will be engaged in related reading activities.

The children's responses to questions about their activities were:

1] "My plans for today are to work on a skills sheet on outlining. I'm writing a report for social studies, and I found I needed this help. When I'm finished with this lesson, I plan to read a book I chose about football which is my favorite sport. Would you like to see my special vocabulary list that deals with sports? All of us have made lists of words that have a special meaning for us or that interest us. I've learned to use the dictionary to make sure I have the exact word I need."

2] "I'm working on this material that will help me pick out main ideas. I am writing a paper on space exploration. I found so many books and articles that I asked the teacher how I could choose the ideas I need from so many places. The book I'm reading right now is on space, but I have read books from many categories throughout the year."

3] "I'm working on practice material to help me with root words, prefixes, and suffixes. Sometimes I have trouble working out new

words, and I don't spell too well. The teacher has helped me choose some workbook pages to help me. Our whole class has been taught to use glossaries in science and social studies books, and I have my own dictionary to use when I need help with a word. Jim and I are reading the same book on the Old West. When we share the book with the class, we are planning to do it wearing costumes."

4] "Our group is discussing biographies we have read. We will be discussing ways famous people are alike, the kinds of things they have done, and how we feel about these people. Often, the teacher joins us, and occasionally the principal drops in. We are planning to discuss our books at the next P.T.A. meeting because our parents like to hear about what we are reading."

5] "We are practicing reading orally using this social studies filmstrip. We previewed it, worked out the new words, and made an outline to help us when we present and discuss the filmstrip with our class. We have prepared a test to give to the class to help us check whether we have gotten across the major ideas of the filmstrip."

6] "There are three of us in this group working on syllables. This one is our last group meeting because we think we have enough practice on this skill and can go on to some other things. Syllables aren't so hard to figure out if you say the word first and listen carefully to the number of vowel sounds."

7] "I'm re-reading this book because I'm going to present a book review to another class. We are often invited to visit other classes. They enjoy hearing about the books we read and often borrow them. I'm choosing parts of the book with lots of action and conversation so it will be interesting. This one is an easy book for me, but sometimes I pick easy books because I like them."

8] "This is my conference period. The teacher is checking my practice page on vocabulary. Then we will discuss the book I'm reading and talk about the characters in the story. I've chosen a few paragraphs to read orally which I think really describe some of the characters. I found some hard words, but I was able to get them when I used the word-attack skills I know. I really had a hard time making up my mind about what books I wanted to read. My friend reported on this book, and it sounded swell; so I chose it, too. I have my reading folder with me so I can record what my next activities will be when the teacher and I decide what I need to do."

Children have been observed in this classroom reading for enjoyment, working on skills independently or in needs groups, participating in an interest group, and conferring with the teacher. We have seen that the reading period utilized materials from all of the content areas, as well as from trade books. In any one day, the activities include many of the skills of reading, depending upon the needs of individual children. Teacher comments include:

1] "Did you notice that the children know why they are doing what they are doing? Every assignment or activity serves a purpose for them. In other words, in this approach, children take an active responsibility for their own learning."

2] "No doubt, you were aware of the varied kinds of activities going on. The children are very creative about planning their reading activities. We schedule a specific period for reading, but the reading activities permeate the whole day. Children use unassigned time in purposeful ways which are related to reading. It never ceases to amaze me how quickly the children grow in their ability to become independent learners."

3] "Personal writing by the children has improved immensely. Many of their activities require skill in writing. On occasion, we have found it helpful to have lessons for the entire class which relate to improving writing skills. Spelling has improved as children develop their own vocabulary lists and use the dictionary more efficiently."

Reading Skills in Content Areas

How do children who participate in individualized reading work with content materials? Teachers' comments follow:

1] "We have basic and supplementary texts in all of the content areas. Because the children have experience with a wide range of reading materials, they tend to seek a variety of materials in the content areas which enable them to follow their special interests. We have gathered many trade books, newspapers, magazines, paperbacks, and filmstrips. Because these materials in the content areas become part of our room collection, children select some of these materials to use for their personal reading. Skills instruction might also be based on these materials. Children are aware of the fact that they must approach the reading of content materials differently from the way they would approach the reading of library books. They

also recognize the need to adjust their rate of reading as they use different material."

2] "The individualized reading approach permeates the whole day and has become a way of living and learning with us. I find that I teach reading skills all day in every subject. Children truly utilize the skills of reading as learning skills in all curriculum areas."

Evaluating the Skills Program

How effectively does an IRP help children become more efficient and independent readers? Teachers' responses include:

1] "The basic skills tests we give show that the children do an excellent job in learning skills."

2] "The children read more extensively and with more enjoyment. Parents who visit the classrooms are amazed at the pupil interest and participation. Many parents tell about the increased number of books children read at home."

3] "Reading in the content areas shows remarkable improvement. One of the real surprises to me was the improvement in arithmetic problem solving."

4] "Because of personal involvement, probably the biggest plus-value of individualized reading is the positive self-concept developed by children. Children feel better about themselves!"

5] "I am pleased that oral reading is done for valid reasons."

6] "There are several factors that concern me. One concern relates to what will happen to these children if they move to another room with a different program. However, I do feel that they are becoming independent readers. If they return to basic-text instruction, they will be able to pursue their broad interest in reading through the content subjects and during leisure time. Also, as I view my role, it is to give the best possible experiences to my pupils each year. Another concern is that I spend a lot of time on reading. However, since much of the reading is related to all areas of the curriculum, I feel no learning area is neglected."

Summary

It is obvious that this brief glimpse of an IRP in action is somewhat limited. The classroom groups described above are in their fourth year in school. Primary teachers might well ask how effective an IRP would be

for their children. First-grade teachers, especially, might wonder whether this approach is a realistic one for initial reading instruction. The introduction to reading and skills can be done through the use of experience charts and stories dictated by the children. These materials can be used to teach sight words and the beginning word-attack skills. Some teachers find it helpful to use a basic-text series for this beginning stage. The monograph, *A Practical Guide to Individualized Reading* (*4*), has proved to be a good source of help for teachers working with children at the beginning-to-read stage. Once the child has moved beyond this stage, the organization and procedures suggested throughout this presentation can be appropriate when adapted to the maturity of primary-grade children.

Other important factors are apparent. One is that teachers must be willing to experiment with this approach, for the program is as individual as the teacher wishes and the needs of the children dictate. This program demands that the teacher be open-minded, independent in action, inquiring in spirit, and respectful of children as individuals. Another factor is that while research has shown that children in an individualized program do as well or better in reading achievement and skills development as in a basic-text approach, it is recognized that results of performance tests do not tell the whole story. It is the positive change in pupil self-concept, the growth in independence, and pupil commitment to "learning how to learn" that encourages teachers to continue individualized reading programs.

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SELECTED PUPIL-PRACTICE MATERIAL

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2. Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 757 Third Avenue, New York, New York. *Word Analysis Practice: Intermediate Series, Levels A, B, C.*
3. Garrard Publishing Company, 862 Scarsdale Avenue, Scarsdale, New York. *Dolch Sight Materials: Picture Word Cards, Popper Words, Sight Cards, Group-Word Teaching Games, Sight-Phrase Cards.*
4. Webster Division, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1154 Reco Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri. *Conquests in Reading; Word Analysis Charts* (set of 5); *Webster Word Wheels* (63 wheels); *Reading Skills Cards* (224 cards).
5. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2 Park Street, Boston, Mass. *Workbooks, Readiness Level to Grade 6, Reading for Meaning Series, 4th Edition, 1966.*
6. The Macmillan Company, 60 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York. *The Macmillan Reading Spectrum Workbooks* on Vocabulary Development (6 levels), Reading Comprehension (6 levels), and Word Analysis (6 levels).

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6. Individualized Reading and Creative Writing

GOOD TEACHERS over the years have always used the stories, poems, letters, essays, and research reports which children write as vehicles for developing better understanding and control of the particular factors of composition as well as a means of improving reading and listening abilities. It is common today, therefore, to see first-grade teachers developing an experience chart as a group composition-reading experience (*5*). In the ability-grouping program of reading these charts are used to introduce vocabulary and concepts, to give repetition to the "new" words in the reader, to provide practice in word analysis, and to check comprehension. In the middle grades almost all teachers on occasion have children read their written compositions aloud while their classmates listen. The proponents of individualized reading do not disagree with these composition-reading activities. They do argue, nevertheless, that the use of writing should be used in the development of reading in a more direct and emphatic way.

For example, in individualized reading the writing children do is utilized for their reading development in more creative ways than were seen above. Ordinarily one might say, "Seldom do all children create at the same time. As a matter of fact, creative writing is really only for some of the children some of the time" (*9*:16).

But there are no such qualifications with a reading program oriented toward the creative-language approach. With this approach in the first grade the teacher continually encourages the child to tell about the unique aspects of his life in a number of ways. He orally verbalizes his impressive experiences, he acts out his happiest moments, he paints or draws of those events nearest and dearest to him. At this point the teacher begins to record these outpourings in the child's language. She writes down in his own lexicon a line or two of the experiences the child has

shared with his classmates. She describes, as the child might have described it, what his dramatic behavior exhibits. She makes note of the many perceptions of the size, color, shape, position, spacial arrangements, and internal details of objects he exhibits through his spoken language. The pupil in turn dictates to the teacher what to him are the important features of his artistic or graphic expressions.

The content from which the child will learn to read his first words and sentences is taken from this stockpile of first-hand language. As she records the child's responses, the teacher-secretary makes sure that concepts, vocabulary, sentence structure, and usage are highly respected. It is unlikely these sentences will read as do the traditional readers; "Run, Tom! Run, run, run!" or as do the newer "linguistic" readers; "A fat frog sat on a raft." This respect for the child's natural language is important so that when he reads it back, it rings true; that is, it corresponds to his inner voice, thoughts, and emotional attachments.

Language-Experience Approach

This process has come to be called learning to read through experience or the language-experience approach (*6, 8*). Preliminary to the writing of stories there must be, as implied above, many instances in which the pupil tells or shares his personal life, in which he reacts to the lives of his classmates, in which he listens to stories from his teacher, and when he tells or dictates stories back to her. From these procedures the child comes to realize that written language is recorded speech and that he has a unique speech-personality worthy of approbation from his teacher and classmates.

Entry into Writing

In their experiences with the language-experience approach many teachers have recognized that one of the smoothest entries into the act of reading via children's experiences is through the words the child uses to explain his drawings. It can be said almost without fear of contradiction that all children can draw and then tell about what they drew. Since children find this mode of personal expression so natural and fulfilling, they readily label their drawings. These become the prime material of first-step reading.*

*Even in the middle grades it has been observed that when children first draw a series of pictures illustrating the important points in a plot, and then write a story about these pictures, the structure of the story noticeably improves.

As the child's powers of word recognition grow so will the length of the dictation his teacher records. This dictation the teacher often takes as children explain their pictures or tell their stories within a small group. The group enjoys the picture or story; the teacher puts the content of their enjoyment into written form. Whether the child's personal language should be recorded here is problematic. "One of the values of the personal-language chart is its invitation to use *real* language. It should be enjoyed and then discarded or erased" (6:48). Frequently, however, these illustrated stories are stapled into "books"; placed in a classroom reading center; and reread aloud and independently by the composer, his teacher, and classmates.

Language-Experience in Middle Grades

The language experience activity does not end with the primary grades. In fact, as children's powers of written expression improve, the enjoyment others have in these writings correspondingly expands. Thus, in the middle grades it is not unusual for the writings of some children to actually compete with the works of professional adult writers for their classmates' attention. Many middle-grade teachers who have maintained a constantly expanding and changing classroom center of children's writings also find these materials provide great incentives for other children to write. Thus, the teacher who encourages children to write for the enjoyment or edification of others can create the most favorable attitude toward and conscientious respect for readability from children who, without this spur, are seen to grow increasingly careless of this aspect of written composition.

The use of the language-experience approach in the middle grades has other values. Principally, it tends to restrain a tendency by teachers at these grade levels to fragment the language-arts program into a number of isolated subjects, each of which is based on a separate content and is given its own parcel of time. As it integrates reading, spelling, listening, writing, handwriting, and speaking, the individualized program saves badly needed time and gives many additional opportunities to practice several much-needed language skills in close relationship to a common goal of learning to read.

Writing Builds Vocabulary in Individualized Reading

In the language-experience approach to reading there is conspicuously absent the concept of vocabulary control. That is, there is little attempt

made to shape children's independent or dictated stories into a grade-level word list. There seems almost no danger in this procedure, however, since children in their language practices do, of course, use all the so-called high-frequency words found in the various word lists. It can be said, moreover, that a mastery of the recognition of these highly functional words is more likely in an individualized language-experience reading program because of the natural language context in which the child reads. Here each story the child reads is directly connected to his recorded life experiences and thus to that for which he has relatively high emotional attachments. With the individualized approach there seems little need, therefore, for the teacher to strain for the tedious repetition seen in many experience charts:

Our Zoo Trip
We saw a tiger.
We saw a lion.
We saw a bear.
We liked the trip.

In the individualized approach a more likely result of writing about this trip would be:

How I Feel About the Zoo
I was scared when the tiger snarled and swished his tail. The bear did tricks and made me laugh. Then I felt OK.

If one accepts the idea that writing words tends to aid in word recognition and retention or that what a child writes he can read more easily than what an adult writes for him (because it is more important to him), then it follows that the child-written story will be more effective in developing vocabulary. The teacher-controlled story, its lack of vocabulary control notwithstanding, is obviously not modeled after the basal reader style of writing but after natural speech patterns of children.

The assumption of the importance of vocabulary control in written materials in the middle grades has also come into question. As Dechant says:

> The principle of vocabulary control apparently used in basal materials may not be valid. Vocabulary control is more than simply limiting the number of words and their rate of introduction. Frequency of use is not

a valid criterion either, and yet, these seem to be the primary criteria of control in the basal series (*3:*203).

Advocates of individualized reading in the middle grades through individualized writing would add that the personally emotional stimulus of a word, and the individual's need for it, will be a more effective control on its use than will the frequency-distribution scheme so often employed.

Sharing and Reporting Through Writing

As is explained elsewhere in this teaching aid, a child under the IRP reads books of his own choice, for his own purposes, and at his own speed. In partial exchange for this freedom and self-determination, he should share with others in small group sessions the pleasure, knowledge, and appreciation gained through reading. There are many activities that can be offered the child as means to share or report in this way (*4*). The child might read aloud or give an oral report on parts of the book, dramatize parts of it, make an artistic expression of it, or write about it. Through the written report the child may find more rewarding and longer lasting reactions from peers and teachers than through oral reports.

The teacher should prepare a list of writing opportunities and post it conspicuously so that the child will feel he has a wide choice of topics. Such a list might suggest that, for the book he reads, a child could write

an opinion of the book,
a biographical account of its author,
a letter to the author or publisher,
an advertisement for it,
descriptions of a few favorite characters,
an original story based on it,
an imaginary episode that could be included in the book,
a parody or satire of the book,
a television playlet based on it,
a new character for it,
what the book contributed to an ongoing research project,
five improvements that would have made it a better book,
how the book is like or different from the reader's life,
a song or poem based on the characters or story,
a different ending for it,
an invitation for others to read the book,
a list of questions about the book,

a few riddles about the book,
several clues as to the identity of the book,
a list of interesting words or sentences from it,
a list of things learned from the book,
an outline of its plot structure,
a plan for a demonstration of something from the book,
a comic strip based on it,
what might happen in the next chapter of the book, or
what the book would say about itself if it could talk.

Pupils also find it enjoyable to rewrite the book as a story for younger children; or as a report by an on-the-spot reporter; or as a fable, myth, or legend; or with a change of setting or locale.

Basically, children fail to write because they have not had enough memorable detail in their lives to stimulate and organize their thinking and language. Individualized reading provides one way to make up for this omission. As children explore large numbers of books of interest to them, they also grasp a large number of suggestive and energizing items which can kindle in them an urge to write.

Individualized reading can also help the child who wishes to delve deeply into a topic of interest and to write a "research" report on it. Through his wide reading from several sources the child is more likely to be able to answer basic research questions. "What do I want to know?" "What key works and words do I look for?" "What are important questions to ask?" "What will be my outline for my research report?" Newman (7) suggests the child sign a "study contract" for individualized reading for research to include these headings and the date the research will be completed. Files of all these writings can be kept by the child which will help him study the development of his abilities to record his experiences and determine the aspects in composition in which he needs to improve.

Children Record Individualized Reading Experiences

Children under individualized reading must take much of the responsibility for keeping records of their experiences. In this way, teachers are released from unnecessary checking and accounting. It has a secondary importance, too, in giving further purpose for writing skills.

The records children keep (a folder for each child is called for) can be in the form of questions the child answers about individualized reading

(*4*:122-128). He may be asked: "What kinds of books do you like?" "Why?" "What specific titles?" "What authors would you like to be?" "Where do you get your books?" "How do you choose your books?" "How do you know you will be able to read them?" "What do you do when you see a hard word?" "When, where, and how much do you read?" "Do you like individualized reading?"

To learn more about his pupils under individualized reading, the teacher may want them to use a book wish (what I wish books were like), to finish an incomplete sentence inventory (e.g., I work best when . . .), or to write a reading autobiography (*2*:35-36).

There are other aspects of record keeping that involve writing. The child can write lists of difficult words and phrases from the books he reads. Personal dictionaries of such words can be written on separate pages of paper stapled together into "Word Books." He can contribute short written comments for inclusion in a chart or bulletin board centered on reading books on a certain theme (e.g., foreign lands, history, fantasy and mystery, animals, and learning to get along with people). The title, author, length of time it took to read a book, and a short comment on it can be written on cards which are filed alphabetically for use by other children.

To give him a greater sense of continuing accomplishment and to help replenish his interests in individualized reading, the teacher can suggest the child keep a daily record of how he spends his time in individualized reading. Such a record might read:

Monday	Looked for a book on early Americans. Found *Ben Franklin of Old Philadelphia* by Margaret Cousins and *Benjamin Franklin* by Ingri and Edgar d'Aulaire. Like the last one better. Read 20 minutes. Wrote the hard words on cards.
Tuesday	Met with Mr. Groff for our conference. Showed him my hard words. Practiced my hard words with Chris.
Wednesday	Finished 20 more pages in my book. Put the name of the book on the "Who Reads What" chart. Wrote some questions about the book for sharing period.
Thursday	Et cetera.
Friday	Et cetera.

Summary

With the realization clearly in mind of the close relationship of reading and writing and the realization of the countless ways abilities in one of these areas carry over and reinforce skills in the other, the teacher using individualized reading makes constant use of writing as an aid to reading development. Moreover, the focus of this discussion has been that individualized reading offers greater potential for stimulating functional and creative writing than might otherwise be possible. With this approach the child each day writes the stories he reads, shares his reading through writing, and keeps written records of his experiences. The teacher finds it less arduous to improve the language skills involved in these processes. Finally, the possibility of maintaining language arts as a truly integrated program seems much more likely if the language-experience activities become an integral part of the individualized reading program at all grade levels. It is worthwhile to remind oneself of this fact, despite the fear of belaboring the obvious, since the importance of language experience has been overlooked in some discussions of individualized reading (*1*).

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7. Evaluation for Pupil Effectiveness

TODAY'S CHILDREN are confronted with problems vastly different from those faced by the youngsters of former years, when there were no school lunch programs, no school buses, school libraries, inexpensive paperback books, and automated work-saving devices. Today children grow up with fewer chores to do; fewer miles to walk; many more books, magazines, television, movies, and other forms of recreation to enjoy; but "nothing to do" in the way of choices for worthy use of leisure time. To a casual observer, it would appear that these conditions should provide more time for personal reading and stimulate a greater desire to read. Such may be the case for some children; but for most children, the contrary appears to be true. Therefore, the aim of the Individualized Reading Program (IRP) is to develop in children a love for reading books rather than to just "train" children to know how to say the words.

It is hoped that reading will become an integral part of every child's life. The old adage that learning to read takes place in the first grade, or in the first and second, or in the first three grades is dramatic oversimplification. In the first grade children can conscientiously begin a lifetime process of reading that we hope will give increasing pleasure and intellectual fulfillment. Children can use the first grade reading program as a springboard for growth and enjoyment so that they will continually develop reading as an integral part of their way of life.

To teach reading with focus requires careful scrutiny of how the child matures within the total reading program. Consequently, evaluation can be defined in many ways. But the single most important definition of evaluation in the IRP is the procedure followed to help children recognize their own capabilities and/or limitations within the reading process; and to improve upon any limitations in a positive, enthusiastic way. In essence, it is the yardstick we use to produce *readers* rather than children "who know how to read."

The Objective Versus Subjective Issue

Every reading program is concerned with children's progress in reading. While teachers of the IRP can effectively rely upon subjective judgment to determine how children are growing in the program, they also must be concerned about judgments based upon objectively derived evidence to support the rate of growth made in reading by their children.

Some areas of reading which can be measured objectively are vocabulary development, comprehension, rate of silent reading, oral reading, and study skills. To assess these areas, both formal and informal tests can be used. These tests may come from standardized tests, tests developed from various classroom materials, vocabulary tests, teacher made oral reading tests, or formal and informal study skills tests.

While teachers may test these more "concrete" areas of reading growth, caution must be exercised in interpreting the results. The limitations of all testing instruments are such that they can never fully measure certain parts of the IRP. Tests do not measure accurately such important factors as a youngster's ability to:

1] reveal values he has found to be most worthwhile in books;
2] maintain personal interest in a single selection or book;
3] consistently select books which meet his specific personal needs;
4] indicate his knowledge and application of word recognition skills;
5] utilize follow-up procedures for reference work;
6] review the material he has read by emphasizing cause-effect relationships and logical order of development; or
7] continue to build vocabulary.

While it is difficult to measure known factors in individualized reading, think how much more difficult it is to assess the intangible factors. Less evident accomplishments commonly recognized by the alert teacher using IRP are the:

1] development of a positive attitude in reading;
2] fostering interest in reading;
3] development of new areas of interest;
4] realization that reading is the heart of the curriculum;
5] selectivity of taste, discrimination and judgment;
6] ability to discuss what has been read;
7] free reading outside the classroom;
8] new thinking patterns;

9] greater sense of personal responsibility; and
10] self-pride.

The intangibles as reviewed above cannot be measured objectively. These increments of growth can only be observed and then evaluated in terms of interest, reaction, and application with reading. But teachers must evaluate these less tangible accomplishments through:

1] the kinds of books chosen by each child over a period of time;
2] records based on observation and on individual conferences;
3] creative writing which has been stimulated by reading;
4] oral and written reports;
5] evidence of creative productivity resulting from reading, such as painting, drawing, puppetry, diorama, experiments, and home-made projects;
6] use of vocabulary;
7] sense of humor, both subtle and general;
8] use of all reference materials for research topics of interest;
9] activities out of school which may have resulted from reading;
10] reaction to reading and reporting made by others, including the teacher.

When teachers understand the values of appraising the unmeasurables as well as the perceptible growths, it is evident that they understand the basic purposes of the IRP. Great emphasis is placed upon building lasting values along with fostering the acquisition of reading skills. It is in the area of values that the IRP displays its greatest assets. Values themselves cannot always be clearly assessed. However, attitudes, feelings and interests are important categories of human behavior and consequently must be considered.

Evaluation Through Self-Selection

One method of evaluation which is partly objective is counting the number of books read by the children. Certainly this one measure cannot be used as a single criterion for determining the degree of success in reading because the number of books read cannot tell the complete story. The number of books read is necessary information, but the quality of books read is a greater indication of success.

The purpose of self-selection is to provide the child with the opportunity to exercise his right to the seeking-behavior pattern (*1*). This

allows children to choose their own materials, and it provides them with diversity in reading. It is not unusual for children to become interested in one particular subject—such as dogs, horses, hot rods, sports, or science —and then express this interest by reading only in this topic area. Teachers in the IRP are supposed to guide youngsters from one reading interest to several. A measure of effectiveness in this guidance activity is revealed by the varied interests children display in books selected for reading. Recording books by categories is basically an individual matter and should be assessed on an individual basis.

A very important area of evaluation deals with attitudes. In most cases attitudes can be measured by an informal means; however, questionnaires have been prepared which measure the attitudes of children, the attitudes of parents, and even the attitudes of teachers toward the classroom reading program (*2*).

Attitudes of children toward the classroom program and toward reading books are measurable. Attitude inventories consisting of questions requiring choices about some aspect of reading are not difficult to develop. Sperber (*3*) has developed this type of reading attitude inventory which could be used as a guide for teachers in developing a reading attitude inventory in their own classes.

Obviously, many intangible factors which indicate success of the IRP cannot be measured. Parkin (*4*) states, "Then there are certain gains she [the teacher] cannot help observing: freedom of choice and the joy that accompanies it; release from the tethering pull of the group; release from the stigma of the group label; a relaxed attitude toward reading; the pleasure of making reading a live dynamic activity; more time for reading for the purposes that reading can serve; a change of emphasis from competition with one group to competition with one's self."

The Evaluation Derived from Teacher-Pupil Conferences

Since teachers, for the most part, work with individuals, it is essential to record important data referring to the way children are reading. Keen observation by the teacher is vital. Much of this observation can be accomplished through group activities and class participation. Individual conferences become necessary because it is not likely that truly accurate notes can always be made during group activities.

A primary function of the teacher during the conference is to assess the needs of each youngster. Veatch (*5*) says it so well in her latest book. "The individual conference is the peak, the apex, the climax, the high

point of the instructional reading program. Everything that comes before leads to it. Everything that comes after should be determined by what happens in it."

The conference may well be referred to as the heart of the evaluation process in the IRP. Notes made from the conference serve not only as a reminder of what the child needs and is doing but also as a record for the teacher. Typical items recorded should include the approximate reading level of the child, an estimate of his reading potential, his interests, and specific needs for special help with skills development.

The Keeping of Records

All teachers should devise their own way of keeping records, a system which is "comfortable" and "purposeful" for her. Record keeping need not be a burdensome chore; it is a personalized system of evaluation whereby the teacher always knows what is happening to each child.

In many cases, the children and the teacher may keep records together. Children always find record keeping a challenge; for them it is a way to make accomplishment evident. In the lower grades, teachers can prepare simple forms for the children to record their reading progress. This can be done easily with three by five note cards, a loose-leaf notebook, or other form of chart.

Children themselves can be as resourceful as the teacher in keeping their own records. It need not be a burdensome chore for the child, but merely a simple way of keeping visible his personal accomplishments and needs. Creative, attractive, enjoyable ways can be devised readily to assist children with record keeping.

Summary

Inherent in evaluation in the IRP is assessing the development of purposeful reading. Children need guidance in discovering the values inherent in purposeful reading. While many values can be cited, IRP is most involved with the value of pleasure children find in reading activity. There is no denying that pleasurable and purposeful reading is dependent upon the mastery of recognition and comprehension skills. However, many children attain satisfaction in reading but never pursue reading independently. These children know how to read but cannot be classified as "readers." Nevertheless, many children do find that reading awakens their senses, stirs their imaginations, and arouses their emotions. These

children not only know how to read, they are true readers as well and will continue to pursue reading throughout life.

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8. Evaluation for Program Effectiveness

THE FOCUS for converging forces in individualized reading is the classroom. It is here that the demands of children, society's changing philosophies, the findings of experimental research, and the best from teaching experience are utilized and realized. It is here that life is real and earnest for both the teacher and children. The ideas, ideals, and proposals so often written on paper must be impressed upon living tissue. Responsibility is no longer an abstraction but a living reality. Never will "keeping school," "keeping in sequence," and "keeping the teaching of reading focused on test scores in a prescribed fashion" be considered an adequate criterion for teaching reading.

Truly the major responsibility of the teacher is to bring about the maximum degree of reading achievement in each student. From the beginning to the end of the year, the teacher is concerned with the important question, "Has the desired amount of reading achievement been realized?"

Although evaluation in reading is generally thought of in conjunction with tests and examinations, it is also present in every attempt by the teacher to ascertain how well learning to read has been realized. Within the reading program, innumerable occasions arise to offer opportunities to judge and determine progress quite accurately. The key to all evaluation for both teacher and pupil is responsiveness; and any form of response, be it oral reading, silent reading, quality of comprehension, reporting, vocabulary development, word attack, word manipulation, or selection of materials, may help to determine achievement in a definite though somewhat limited way. Answering questions, discussing reading during teacher-pupil conferences and during directed reading, or in myriad other response-making situations, pupils expose their levels of understanding in reading. If a teacher is alert and attuned to these

responses he soon discovers children's various needs and is, in all truth, determining progress or measuring results.

So, do you want to know how to conduct evaluation procedures in your individualized reading program? Do you want everything listed? If such were done, there would be hundreds or even thousands of specific activities. Should anyone attempt to labor along that line, even if he did list every item, he would find it difficult to measure these numerous and specific particulars. Consequently, evaluation will be discussed under eight principles.

As a preliminary step it becomes necessary to classify these principles for evaluative purposes. Evaluation in terms of these principles becomes a direct teacher activity but only indirectly an activity by children. Progress is revealed through their responses as observed by the teacher

So significant is teacher responsibility for evaluation in the IRP that it is set apart. A teacher needs a constant reminder that evaluation is a major responsibility. The teacher must set the ground rules, ground rules within the framework that *All Objectives Should be Most Worthwhile.*

Following the determination of objectives for IR, the teacher must necessarily consider other teaching responsibilities. Objectives jotted down on paper or resting within the teachers mind will avail little, they must be translated into behavioral changes in the pupil's reading. So involved is learning how to read that clear thinking about how one actually does learn should be the next consideration in understanding what a teacher does for evaluation. One of these responsibilities goes directly to the heart of all learning. In every case, the child grows only to the extent that he exerts himself. There is no other way. Out of this fact emerges another procedure: *Children Learn to Read Through Self-Activity, But This Activity Should be Psychologically Sound.*

The realization that all persons, children included, learn through their own efforts and that this activity should be functional indicates that another responsibility of the teacher is to determine which reading activities need to be emphasized so that learning to read will be psychologically sound.

Suppose that children are asked to learn to recognize a certain number of words. These words may be introduced orally or may be written on the board; skill exercises may be organized in order to help the youngsters effectively recognize these words; but this should be done always in conjunction with an activity or material which the youngster feels is a part of his own work. Children then recognize the words more easily and

are able to place them in proper perspective so far as their personal experiences and need for recognizing the words are concerned.

Suppose though, that some pupils are unable to realize that their personal experiences are related to the words which they have studied. How can this inability to recognize these words in the light of personal experiences be explained? Simply then, these children worked faithfully to memorize the words but were unable to repeat them at a later time because the words have no real meaning or value to them in their personal lives. Certainly it was not a lack of self-activity because, no doubt, excessive effort was made to remember the names of these words.

The soundness of the activity cannot be questioned as far as the teaching objective was concerned. Why, then, did not all the children know enough to place the words in the context of experience? First, because memorizing words for the sake of calling them off has its limitations. It is the duty of the teacher to know that the psychological soundness of an activity must always be determined by the nature of the teaching objective. In the second place, the children did not realize that they were to learn the words in the light of meaningful context by bringing to bear their own personal experiences. Consequently, they were unable to truly learn no matter how much they tried to memorize the words. Word recognition is not the same as naming words. So it appears evident that the soundness of the activity must be determined by the established objective to be attained, *self-activity to be psychologically sound should be in fullest agreement with the type or types of learning involved in attaining the objectives.*

While the teaching of reading thus far has been discussed as a progression from general activity to psychological application, there is another responsibility in the IRP that should be evaluated. The phase to be considered at this point is very important and is frequently missed by pupils; therefore, the teacher must direct pupils' thought and effort so that it is not slighted. Sometimes a fragment or item is learned, and the pupil believes that he has learned the total. The perfect point in case is the youngster who tries to unlock a word by employing many attack skills in combination form or hodge podge fashion. Obviously, he has learned only fragments of attack skills and not specific skills in which he can operate with accomplishment. He is conscious of the interrelationship of all skills, but not the application of a specific skill as it seems necessary. In the IRP skills are taught in conjunction with diversified materials that the youngsters are reading at the moment. It is a principle of teaching to

direct learning toward meanings, relationships, applications, organizations, and structures. The principle point of evaluation in the IRP then is that *learning to read should be unitary, not fragmentary.*

Now, learning to read requires effort and, whenever children spend energy in a fruitless undertaking, there are bound to be many factors that might lead to delay, procrastination, loss of interest, boredom, and diminishing effort. If these factors which cause individuals to be halfhearted and lackadaisical about their reading are not corrected, no unusual accomplishment can be expected. Children can become discouraged as do adults. If their labor seems to be of little value to them they get bored. Nevertheless the teacher must help pupils to want to learn to read; she must do all within her power to create the right spirit on the part of the youngster; this means *the energy of pupils should be released so that they apply themselves fully.*

Let us not overlook the innumerable individual differences within the classroom. Each youngster is uniquely different from every other youngster. Pupils are not alike as peas in a pod. Some show striking differences in physical appearance, in health, emotional makeup, and in output of energy and effort. Their ages are not the same. Many are sensitive, while others will be hard and tough. What will be difficult for some children in growing through to reading maturity will be very easy for others. Backgrounds do vary. A few may learn to read easily, while others may have a very difficult time in learning how to read. It seems reasonable to surmise in such a situation that only in the IRP will the teaching of reading be more than the same prescribed diet and treatment advocated originally for the group as a whole. It is essential then that *teaching reading should always provide for individual differences.*

Learning to read, like learning all other tasks, does not proceed evenly and smoothly despite a great desire to learn. When the real job of trying to achieve some goal is undertaken, everyone will find obstacles along the road leading to that achievement. At times special effort will overcome some of the difficult aspect of reading. At other times the difficulty cannot be surmounted; a plateau is reached. When learning to read runs head-on against some perplexing situation and no progress, regardless of effort, results, then the time for special organization is in order. When a child, to use an analogy, is ill, he may be helpless in determining what the trouble is or how to correct it. So, too, pupils in the reading process may not know why they cannot progress or what to do about it. In the IRP at this point, the teacher diagnoses the causes of lack of progress in

reading, analyses the difficulty, and regroups the children to teach certain needed skills. If he does not or cannot do this the children needing this kind of attention will be left out. Indeed, only in IR can the teacher perform this type of teaching and special grouping to *provide for diagnostic and remedial teaching.*

When the teacher and children work together in the IRP, they actually form a small segment of society. Quite naturally, the one teacher in the group because of his knowledge, experience, and delegated authority is expected to guide this little society in a diplomatic way and to provide conditions that will be ideal for work and cooperative effort. Physical conditions such as light, heat, ventilation, and other factors in the environment should be regulated to obtain the best results while children read. The teacher controls the classroom environment by his utilization of facilities and equipment to establish an atmosphere conducive to learning.

The social environment is important. Unless there is some degree of organization and self-control in the classroom, serious and profitable concentration can be hindered. When a child is fearful of the teacher, he will be emotionally strained and may not work as effectively as another individual, or even as other members of the reading group. It is the teacher's obligation therefore, to consider as an art of evaluative procedure the condition of the environment, or that *the physical and social environment for learning should be ideal.*

Now the reader is in a better position to answer the question: What must a teacher do in the IRP to measure his effectiveness? Instead of teaching reading with a long check list in hand of specific things to do, and with a long list of specific ways to measure efficiency and achievement of youngsters, we can organize reading instruction to a set of key responsibilities which in turn form the core of evaluation. These teacher responsibilities indicate what the teacher does in order to serve as a guide for his children, and how he develops insight for himself to measure the success of teaching through the progress made by the children.

Many teachers go through the motions of teaching reading without making a serious attempt to complete the total teaching process. Unless one can visualize the varied purposes underlying a total procedure, one cannot give direction to children in the mastery of skills to be achieved.

Evaluation in the IRP draws heavily from educational psychology, especially upon those divisions pertaining to theories of learning, motivation, and individual differences. This is as it should be. All teaching,

including the teaching of reading, is the influence of educational growth and this growth depends in large measure upon how learning is motivated and directed. What content should be learned is not the province of psychology but the way it is learned is. Therefore, *it is necessary for every teacher of reading to be a keen student of child development and psychology.*

As living requires change, so must the objectives in the teaching of reading change. The IRP provides such teacher diversification and opportunities for teachers of reading to establish new objectives. No other program can match this kind of flexibility. Teaching reading should never become so mechanical that carrying out a traditional set of sequential steps or the manipulation of classroom work by daily assigned tasks minimizes the importance of the teacher. The IRP provides freedom for teachers but demands a respect for individuality. Teaching reading should focus on knowing where one is going and how to get there. As instruction becomes more scientific, there will be less dependence upon trial and error. Individualized reading takes its name from concern for individual differences. It recognizes the importance of seeking behavior, self-selection, pacing, individual conference, and above all the individuality of the teacher. It will be profitable for teachers of reading to look at the criteria for evaluation and to know the responsibilities of both teacher and pupil for the necessary interaction between the two.

Again, let us review these primary responsibilities. They are:

1] The objectives should be most worthwhile.
2] Pupils learn through self-activity, but this activity should be psychologically sound.
3] Self-activity to be psychologically sound should be in the fullest agreement with the type or types of learning involved in attaining the objectives.
4] Learning should be unitary, not fragmentary.
5] The energy of pupils should be released so they may apply themselves fully.
6] Teaching should provide for individual differences.
7] Teaching should be diagnostic and remedial.
8] The physical and social environment for learning should be ideal.

The concept of evaluation in individualized reading is a very critical one. To understand and apply it is no easy task. One must first understand the true purpose and need for individualizing a reading program

before one becomes perceptive about the process of evaluation. Good teaching of reading is founded upon the reading process and how it is developed. The understanding of the process of learning is based essentially upon the developmental characteristics of growth and maturity within each child. Such insight leads to the discovery of flexible teaching procedures which permit individualized reading. Teaching activities without such a basis may be fruitless.

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9. Developing and Supervising Individualized Reading on a School-Wide Basis

The Individualized Reading Program (IRP) at Harvey School, Massillon, Ohio, had its beginning late in the summer of 1962. Today it has advanced to the point where all pupils in the school are receiving some form of individualized reading instruction. Where once principal and faculty were learning about IRP, they are now in demand as teachers and consultants to others who are seeking information about this approach to reading instruction. Because of their accomplishments, staff members have been receiving teachers from other school systems for observations and accepting invitations to be workshop leaders, while the principal has been invited to be a panel member at the International Reading Association Convention. As the 1965-66 year ends, much progress has been made; yet more remains to be accomplished.

Improvement of Reading Instruction Commences

An administrative practice of the Massillon Public School System is to assess all school personnel sometime during each school year. Elementary school principals are evaluated on the following professional activities:

1] instructional leadership,
2] pupil personnel services,
3] public relations,
4] clerical records,
5] plant and equipment, and
6] administrative duties.

Through this annual evaluation in August, 1962, Dr. Virgil Blanke, the superintendent of schools, made it apparent that he considered the

major function of the elementary school principal to be the improvement of classroom reading instruction. This particular principal was in agreement with many educators who contend that teaching reading needs constant and continued attention. On this basis a decision was made to launch a concerted effort in an attempt to improve the classroom reading instruction at Harvey School. This idea was conveyed to staff members during the first fall meeting of the 1962 school year.

Evaluation of Current Instructions

Two conditions are needed before a program of reading improvement can begin to function on a school-wide basis—discomfort and absence of inertia. First the staff must be disturbed about current pupil performance in reading. Thus the first task was to take stock of the reading program of the school. This task was accomplished through a series of faculty meetings. The reading program was evaluated in relation to goals previously established within the school. The problem was to determine the extent to which goals were being met, or not being met, and to establish a plan to close the gap between plans and practice. Fortunately the staff was operating on a premise that all members should work together to recognize common goals and to attain similar values; each staff member, nevertheless, was encouraged to find his or her own solution to the problems common to the school in the area of reading.

As a result of this school-wide evaluation, several major concerns were recognized:

1] To improve the reading skills of our students (sight recognition, work-study skills, silent reading efficiency, oral reading fluency).
2] To meet better the individual needs of our students (the staff had become aware that setting standards for individuals instead of class groups as a whole was a priority need).
3] To encourage students to become more independent in their reading (the teachers agreed that each child should be given a chance to read widely in a variety of books and printed materials and be allowed to explore the richness of ideas found in books).

Consequently to improve the Harvey reading program it was necessary to obtain quantities of varied materials and to use new teaching patterns designed to meet the individual interests and needs of the students. Without question, the staff of Harvey School was concerned with the program of reading instruction and was ready to do something about it.

Beginning to Change A "nudge" or push is needed to overcome inertia and get new plans underway. This "nudge" may come from many sources. In some schools it may come from the superintendent, as it did in the case of Harvey School. In some cases the "nudge" may come from the principal or, in IRP, the classroom teacher herself may initiate the change. Actually, a combination of factors is usually present and it could be the classroom teachers, principals, or the school administrators who set the program in motion.

A critical point had been reached at Harvey School and to improve the reading program real changes had to be made—changes in instructional materials, classroom structure and organization, and in patterns of teaching reading. Various steps were taken to meet these needs. The reading supervisor of the Massillon Public Schools took a leadership role in several meetings; staff members attended a reading workshop; an outside consultant conducted a one-day workshop for Harvey staff members; and a series of IRP films obtained from the Pennsylvania State University was shown. In addition, regularly scheduled staff meetings were devoted to study of the IRP; teachers participated in university reading research projects and took part in system-wide in-service activities.

Staff Preparation In the spring of 1963, Mrs. Kathryn Steiert, then reading supervisor in the Massillon Public Schools, attended a staff meeting to direct a discussion concerning individualized reading. During the discussion excellent interaction occurred among the teachers concerning the nature of the reading process. Later in the year Mrs. Steiert described methods of teaching reading at a meeting of the Harvey School Parent Teacher Association.

As a result of these initial meetings this school principal recognized his responsibility to become more knowledgeable in the management and operation of an IRP on a school-wide basis. Such an opportunity was afforded when a workshop on individualized reading was conducted at the University of Akron in the summer of 1963. In addition to the principal, several members of the staff attended part of the two-week program.

The workshop proved very valuable for several reasons. Through interaction, subsequent to attendance, staff members obtained a greater insight into the reading process. The staff became aware of the class organization and teaching procedures needed to give pupils greater independence in reading. In addition, several outside resources also

became available for further in-service work with the Harvey staff members. Mrs. Anne Petry was one good example.

Mrs. Petry, of the Akron Public Schools and a member of the Akron University reading workshop staff, was invited to Harvey just prior to the opening of school to conduct a one-day workshop for all staff members. Her program was entitled "Creating Enthusiasm for Learning Through Individualized Reading." She did create enthusiasm; her dynamic presentation provided motivation for launching the new school year.

In order to help the teachers over any rough spots which might be encountered as the school year progressed, the idea of staff interaction was continued through regularly scheduled staff meetings. A series of films concerned with individualized reading served as the background for the meetings. These films were produced by Dr. Lyman C. Hunt at the Pennsylvania State University as part of an extensive research project on individualized reading. They were filmed from a series of live TV programs which were the central feature of the research project, "An Experimental Project Appraising the Effectiveness of a Program Series on Reading Instruction Using Open Circuit Television" (*1*). Each film presents an actual demonstration of individualized reading instruction by a teacher working with a small number of children in the TV studio-classroom setting.

The momentum necessary to maintain and give continuity to an in-service program of this type was aided by several projects involving the entire Massillon School System; Harvey School was but a part. During the 1964-1965 school year, twenty first grade teachers of the Massillon Public Schools participated in a research study under the direction of Dr. Kenneth Smith, of the Department of Education at Kent State University.

The study was a comparison of three approaches to teaching reading in the first grade. At Harvey School two teachers used the completely individualized approach while a third used a combination basal reader and individualized approach. For the two teachers using IRP an initial sight vocabulary was taught through experience charts while records of skill instruction were maintained through the use of the Barbe Skills Checklist.

Although the results of the study have not been published, the impact on the first-grade reading program at Harvey School has been pronounced. Many of the changes in instructional practice undertaken for

the study have been maintained during this school year. As a consequence, the first grade reading program has definitely moved in the direction of individualized instruction.

During the present school year (1965-1966) several first-grade teachers in the Massillon Public School System are participating in a study under the leadership of Dr. Lyman Hunt of the University of Akron (2). The study is designed to examine teacher attitude and performance and pupil attitude and performance when first-grade teachers vary reading instruction with regard to numbers of books used in the reading program. Two of the Harvey School first grade teachers are participating in this study. The very act of participating in research studies stimulates learning and change. This stimulation occurs not only for the teachers directly concerned but for other teachers and the principal as well.

System-Wide In-Service Activities A series of meetings on individualized reading for teachers of the Massillon Public School System was carried out over a ten-week period during the spring of 1966. The Harvey School teachers who attended this workshop were presented a basis for self evaluation with regard to program development. Through the discussion of many important issues in reading, individual teachers were given an opportunity not only to reflect and to reconsider but were given the tools to add a firmer structure to the framework of their evolving reading instruction. New and emerging reading programs, classroom organization, the teacher-pupil conference, the language-experience approach, and creative writing were among the topics explored through the workshop.

Program Implementation Teachers were beginning to change. In-service activities had provided the necessary "nudge." However, developing and building a substantially different kind of reading program takes time and continuous effort. Individualized reading is a conceptualization for teaching and not a specific methodology or procedure. It is geared to the individuality of the teacher. The responsibility for instruction lies with her and not with the manual. Because teachers can be themselves, youngsters can learn to be themselves and to be natural readers. The following review of grade-level programs at Harvey School clearly indicates teacher individuality has been an important factor in the attempt to improve reading instruction.

First Grade—Both teachers are using a completely individualized ap-

proach. Experience charts play an important role in building a sight vocabulary during the beginning weeks of the year. Students are given the choice of selecting the books they wish to read. Individual conferences with students are used by both teachers to discuss the materials read. An outstanding feature of the first grade program is the great number of books read by the students. A recent addition is a listening laboratory (tape recorders and ear phones) which has been used for two years. An innovation this year has been the use of a Show 'n' Tell Phono-Viewer.

Second Grade—The second grade teachers are utilizing a variety of reading materials in order to individualize instruction. Basal readers from several companies are used as a part of the program. A Science Research Associates Reading Laboratory and the appropriate Readers Digest Skill Builders are used in an effort to meet the individual needs of the class members. An excellent collection of supplemental books is used extensively by the teachers to enrich their reading program. Creative writing is enjoyed by the students and art work has become a very important outlet for reporting on the books read.

Third Grade—The third grade program is a combination of the Ginn Basal Reader, an SRA Reading Laboratory, and individualized reading. A typical weekly schedule for six or seven reading periods would be one or two days of basal reader, one or two days of SRA Reading Laboratory, and two or three days of individualized reading. Classroom libraries and the school library serve as the source of the books needed for individualized reading. Conferences with the students have an important place in helping the teachers evaluate the reading being done in their classroom. Creative writing is an integral part of the class activity. Students are writing creatively, using as a background the many ideas which they have discovered while exploring books.

Fourth Grade and Fifth Grade—An abundance of materials is very important on this level to meet the wide range of reading abilities and interests found within the classroom. Along with the Ginn Basal Reader, The Scott Foresman Readers and the Harr Wagner supplementary series are used. An SRA Reading Laboratory and its accompanying Pilot Library play an important part in allowing the students to read materials on their reading level and to help them advance at their own rate. An outstanding example of students making judgments

about books they have read is the Junior Great Books Club. Four discussion groups are organized to take part in this program. The groups meet bi-weekly to discuss the book selection they have read.

Sixth Grade—An SRA Pilot Library has proved very beneficial to the sixth-grade program. While reading the short selections, students have become interested in various topics. Consequently, they have read other books and materials on these topics and have also employed research techniques in the school library and the Massillon City Library to gain more information. This year to aid in skills work a MacMillan Spectrum of Skills has been used. Teacher-student conferences are being used extensively by the sixth grade teachers in an effort to bring the students and their books closer together. Student evaluation is made easier for the teachers by a system of record keeping. A skills list and a record of the books read are the major part of this system (*3*).

Summary

The responsibility of the principal does not end with the implementation of a new program. Growth must be continuously stimulated. The principal must give support and encouragement to all staff members and he must give realistic and practical help if a program is to continue to improve. However, in the final analysis, success will depend on the skill of the teachers, their understanding of the reading process, and the continued supervision and support of the school principal. IRP on a school-wide basis is truly a team effort.

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10. Of Stars and Statistics

A GREAT MANY teachers today have stars in their eyes. They are the ones who feel refreshed and excited because they have been released from the strictures of misused single basal reader programs that once required every child to plod through the same stories that he might have heard others read and discuss before him. In most schools the teacher who uses a variety of interesting books of differing difficulty to help make reading profitable for his or her class no longer feels the stings of verbal stilettos projected by jealous, less ambitious colleagues; nor does he receive the criticism that used to come from a misguided supervisor when one did not follow a lock-step program.

It is no longer uncommon to find well-stocked elementary school libraries that provide books to extend and differentiate basal group teaching or to initiate various types of individualized reading programs. So constellations of kids see happy lights twinkling in the eyes of their teachers.

Research Suggests Cautions

I love to see stars in teachers' eyes! Invariably those stars are reflected and multiplied scores of times in the eyes of children seeing new visions and vistas through books. But beware! Unstable stars can fall from their heights of weightless ecstasy and be burned into extinction by the friction of reality in the earth's atmosphere. We, likewise, can suddenly be overwhelmed by unrecognized problems inherent in individualized reading programs. Then the spontaneous reaction of reality can blister away our advances of freedom and enrichment. It behooves us, therefore, to look beyond the warm starry promise of this new-found freedom toward the cold statistical truths that suggest certain cautions and modifications for the individualized programs we have in operation.

Let us be careful not to be misled by accepting experimental findings without critical evaluation.

Enthusiastic proponents of any instructional plan are often tempted to overstate their case. Among summaries of experiments purported to favor totally individualized reading one usually will find studies that contain serious faults.

1] Most of the experiments have included no control groups for comparison.

2] Experiments that have included control groups in their design have not always controlled all aspects of instruction. A close look at the reports often shows that extra time was spent on reading in the individualized classes, extra books were made available, and teacher selection procedures did not assure equivalence.

3] Achievement in many experiments is influenced by halo or novelty effects, the UFO's of the world of research. A recent study in Wisconsin, for example, may have suffered from halo effects even though it provided the most varied types of data and was one of the longest and most carefully planned experiments on this subject. After spending their first three years in two different programs, the groups in this study did not achieve at significantly different levels in oral reading, nor on a measure of social adjustment. The mean scores on tests of vocabulary and comprehension were significantly different favoring the individualized classes, even though these differences were very slight (from .5 to 1.5 raw score points) (*15*). Questions about novelty effects arise when we observe that on arithmetic comprehension, the test involving the least reading, the mean scores of individualized classes were 2.5 points higher than those of children in basal reader groups. If the classes in the two programs were of equal ability, why should the experimental classes surpass the control classes so much in arithmetic, an area of work not directly involved in the experiment? Was it because of the novelty of being in experimental groups? Might there have been a difference in teacher capabilities between experimental and control groups?

4] While several studies offer fairly adequate proof that some teachers can employ the individualized approach to produce satisfactory pupil achievement on general tests of vocabulary and comprehension, there are many questions that have not yet been answered (*7, 25*). "Does it teach the reader to set purposes for reading, to alter

his rate to suit purpose and material, to use a dictionary, to gather and organize information? Does it give him knowledge of roots, prefixes, and suffixes needed to analyze and understand difficult vocabulary encountered later? Does it teach him to appreciate such literary qualities as honesty, imagery, figurative speech, apt characterization, and language facility? . . . Does it teach him to evaluate material read in respect to its factual or fanciful nature, its relevance, its adequacy, its completeness, its accuracy, and its propaganda features?" (*20*) Unfortunately the observations made by Austin and Morrison for the Harvard Report show that skills teaching in individual conference was scanty, with most stress on general factual comprehension and little on high level comprehension and critical reading (*3*).

Let us be sure that this approach is suited to our general teaching capabilities and will continue to stimulate our own enthusiasm and that of our children.

Many studies have shown that certain teachers generally produce better results than others regardless of specific methods used (*21, 14*). Each teacher should utilize the techniques that are most successful for him, and individualized reading may or may not be one. The enthusiasm of children, too, must be maintained after the initial novelty wears off. Perhaps this was a problem in the Wisconsin study, which showed individualized classes reading more books in first grade, but fewer than basal group classes in the third grade (*15*).

Let us be sure that we have enough knowledge of desired outcomes, materials, evaluative and diagnostic techniques, and teaching methods to provide adequate individual skills programs for all children.

Groff questioned thirty-four teachers who had used individualized reading successfully and found their main problems concerned their lack of books, their lack of familiarity with books, and inadequate pupil habits of self-direction. The majority felt basal readers and workbooks should be used to teach word analysis skills before or in connection with the individualized work (*12*). These teachers certainly showed good judgment if we take seriously the results of several investigations of other teachers' knowledge of skills we are supposed to teach. Separate studies by Spache and Baggett (*23*) and by Aaron (*1*) yielded quite similar results. When teachers were given tests on phonics and syllabication, their

scores were related to length of teaching experience, but most teachers revealed serious shortcomings in their knowledge of word analysis principles. One group of experienced instructors averaged only 75 per cent of the phonics items correct and 68 per cent of the syllabication rule items (*23*). Using her own *Phonics Test for Teachers,* Durkin found that although experienced teachers could *apply* word analysis rules fairly well, only as few as two per cent and 29 per cent could *explain* certain principles that they had utilized (*8*).

Several additional studies (*6, 10, 17, 22*) have provided further evidence that many of us lack adequate knowledge for teaching reading skills without a guide, and a couple more suggest that we cannot diagnose pupils' difficulties satisfactorily through observation of their daily reading. Working with twenty-three teachers who were completing a six-credit graduate course in remedial reading, Emans attempted to assess their capabilities in tailor-making instruction to fit individual needs of the children they taught. The teachers were given a list of fifteen reading skills and were asked to rank them in the order they were needed by each of the pupils that each teacher had been tutoring during the course. Although the teachers had had from one to thirty-five years of experience, only five of their forty rankings were enough like rankings on tests so that they could not be accounted for by chance. The investigator concluded that the teachers' judgments about individual reading needs were influenced by bias, and reading skills patterns are too complex for most teachers to diagnose informally (*9*).

Apparently many teachers are well aware of their problems in attempting to diagnose individual skills needs, because 90 per cent of 268 respondents to a questionnaire survey done by Adams indicated that they felt a need for learning more about diagnosis and corrective teaching (*2*).

Although studies of teacher knowledge thus far have dealt almost entirely with the obvious word analysis skills, we might expect that many of us would have as much or more difficulty on tests of some of the more complex comprehension and evaluative reading skills.

Let us be sure that we want to spend the time and effort that is required to make an individualized program fully successful.

Today some of us, both at the elementary and secondary levels, still follow the indefensible practice of teaching reading to a whole class without any differentiation. Others, who are far more conscientious, do not feel we can find time to give adequate attention to more than three

or four reading groups at the most. Is it realistic, then, for some to plan to expend the energy required to plan to teach thirty children as if each were a different group?

Proponents of fully individualized reading usually recommend a minimum of two instructional conferences per week. This means that if you are an intermediate or junior high teacher with thirty pupils in a class, and if you are fortunate enough to have a full hour daily for reading, you will have time for fifteen minutes of daily group activities and only 7½ minutes divided into two conferences per pupil during a week. As a primary teacher you may have twice that much time. Can you teach a child *all* the refinements of reading needed for real scholarship and reading fluency in that length of time? How many hours of careful advance preparation may be required to conduct twelve precise and effective instructional conferences of three or four minutes' length plus certain group activities during an hour's time?

According to observations made for the Harvard Report most individualized reading teachers found it impossible to have conferences as often as recommended; frequently they scheduled a pupil for a conference only once in every one to three weeks (*3*). Safford, in an earlier study, found that teachers who were using an individualized approach in a non-experimental situation produced achievement gains that were markedly inferior to gains in the regular basal reading classes (*18*). Perhaps this was because their energy could not be maintained over a long period of time when they were not receiving the stimulation of being in the experimental spotlight.

A considerable proportion of "individualized reading" teachers report that they save time by grouping the children for most skills work (*12*). This contradicts their contention that they teach a skill exactly when each child needs it.

Let us be careful not to expect all children to learn equally well from the same types of experiences.

Analyses of children's problems in various situations have shown that they have differing capacities for learning by visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and combination modes. Most reading systems place a high premium on visual perception skills, but this is especially true of individualized reading, where group work is minimized. In this situation, what happens to children who need much more opportunity to experience auditory stimuli

through interaction involving reading several times a day with other pupils and the teacher?

Not only must we be concerned about the child's best perceptual mode, but we must also be aware of the effects of classroom atmosphere and organization on learning. Research reported during the last several years suggests that there are two types of pupils who are more successful in a structured classroom situation than in an informal one. These are the children from disadvantaged homes and those who are highly anxious or compulsive.

Ausubel and Ausubel found that in comparison with more privileged children, deprived youngsters depended more on external than internal control; they also had more difficulty in accepting responsibility (*4*). Harris and Serwer, in their year-long experiment involving more than a thousand first grade children from deprived areas in New York, concluded that a carefully structured basal approach produced slightly, but significantly higher, achievement and better pupil attitudes than a language experience approach that gradually progressed into individualized reading (*14*). If, as Reisman says, deprived area children respond best in a situation that includes structure, rules, discipline, order, and strong external demands for achievement (*14*:8), can we expect them to attain maximum success through completely individualized reading?

The second type of relationship between achievement and classroom structure was revealed in a study reported by Grimes and Allinsmith. They discovered that third grade children who were highly anxious or compulsive achieved significantly less reading growth in unstructured, permissive situations than they did in more structured, formal classrooms (*11*). I became fully convinced of the validity of this study by observing four primary children in Pitt's laboratory school this year. Last year this group had a teacher who was highly organized, consistent in expectations, and pleasantly autocratic. The children liked her even though they felt some pressure when doing both group and individual reading work, and they made phenomenal progress. This year they have been with a teacher who tried to individualize some phases of her teaching so completely that the situation appeared somewhat disorganized for a while. The children have liked this teacher, too, but midyear achievement tests showed they had made little or no gains in reading. A study of psychological reports and cumulative records revealed that every one of the four children had a history of anxiety.

While we must provide freedom for exploration and creative thinking

in classrooms, it seems apparent that we must also maintain enough of the structured, systematic procedures so that certain groups of youngsters can progress satisfactorily in learning basic skills.

Let us be careful not to permit the poorly motivated pupil to become a mental dropout.

Every classroom contains, in addition to children having problems of the types just mentioned, some other children who need constant encouragement because they are not readily motivated to do academic work. Some may be from homes where the parents do not read, so they do not place high value on reading. Others may be relatively slow learners who do not find academic pursuits very rewarding. What happens to these children when they are given no more than ten minutes of direct reading instruction per week, or perhaps with an easy going teacher only ten minutes every two or three weeks? Even in my second grade experiment, where all teachers were conscientious about scheduling conferences regularly, children in the lower third of the ten classes learned significantly (at .05) more vocabulary through basal group instruction for three months than through individualized reading for three months (*21*). While some people claim that slow groups learn more by individualized reading than basal group work, this probably would be true only if basal class teachers made no provision whatever for individual differences. No doubt it is better to give a child an interesting book at his reading level, even with little instruction, than to bedevil him into trying to read a grade-level book that is far too difficult.

Combined Approach

The individualized reading movement has inspired us to expand and enrich the reading programs for children in our classrooms. But in our enthusiasm we must be careful not to let the stars in our eyes blind us to possible inadequacies in programs that are entirely individualized. Numerous children have problems of motivation, purposeful self-direction, and need for structure. Most teachers need guidance in planning a complete skills program and in diagnosing pupils' specific difficulties. Therefore more and more teachers prefer to combine the best from both the basal and individualized approaches (*5, 19*). The basal work in small groups can provide the necessary structure with an organized sequential introduction to all the fundamental skills. The addition of individualized reading periods, according to some findings, will stimulate

children to read more widely (*24*) and possibly will insure their having better attitudes toward reading (*13, 16*). That will put stars in our crowns as well as in our eyes!

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